

1937

## National Attitudes with Regard to the Italo-Ethiopian Controversy as Set Forth Before the League of Nations

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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-fgvx-ve40>

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FORTH BEFORE THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

by

Coralie Virginia Arthur

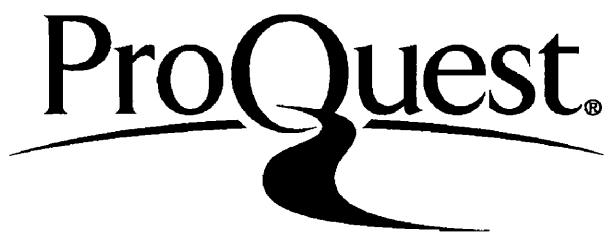
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by

Coralie Virginia Arthur



SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
OF  
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY  
for the degree  
MASTER OF ARTS  
1937

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## Preface

It is the purpose of this study to indicate the attitudes displayed at Geneva by League members in dealing with the Italo-Ethiopian controversy in 1935 and 1936. Germany and the United States of America, although non-members of the League, are also included in the study, because they exerted a considerable influence upon the states represented at Geneva. With the exception of the policies of these two nations, however, this work does not attempt to deal with the intricacies of international relations outside of Geneva which may have had a bearing upon the League's handling of the dispute. It is assumed that the reader is already familiar with the cardinal factors of certain well-known national policies which were operative in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute as well as in other international disputes of recent years. Since understanding of the League's action in this instance may be facilitated, however, by a survey of the specific positions in which the Italo-Ethiopian conflict caught various Great Powers, a brief review of the immediate international background for the controversy is presented in an introductory chapter. This chapter is designed, in effect, to set the stage for the drama which was played in the League chambers at Geneva. Occasional reference to the facts brought out in this preliminary survey is made in the body of the study, and much of the background material is recalled in the chapter entitled "Summary And Conclusions."

## Chapter I - Introduction.

In 1935, Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, was the only state in Africa in which a native government and population had preserved their independence throughout the whole period of European expansion. Located in East Africa and bordered by the possessions of Britain, France, and Italy, the country had on several occasions in its history felt the menace of Europe's imperialistic designs, but, for one reason or another, had escaped complete absorption by any one of the Great Powers. Backward politically and socially, the region was rumored to be rich in economic possibilities. Its central plateau, with a temperate climate, was cultivated by primitive methods, but produced as many as three crops a year, among them barley, millet, wheat, and coffee. There was an abundance of grazing land where the natives pastured flocks of cattle, sheep, and goats. Natural resources, still unexploited in 1935, included rubber and other valuable trees, gold, platinum, iron, coal, copper, sulphur, and potash salts. Lake Tana, located in the mountains of northwest Ethiopia, was the source of the Blue Nile River and therefore controlled a valuable water supply.

At the opening of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy, the social order in Ethiopia was still feudal. The Amharas, a people variously described as being of Semitic and Hamitic origin, who were Christians of the Coptic order and who had absorbed a Negro blood strain as a result of their conquests of neighboring African Negro tribes, constituted the ruling class. As Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, Negus Negasti, or "King of Kings", was attempting an enlightened administration of his dominions, but was hampered by the fact that much of the state business had to be handled through traditional provincial rulers. As a consequence of this cumber-

some system, aggravated by the slowness of communication and transportation, the local chieftains, or rases, enjoyed a large degree of independence. The Emperor, heading a progressive minority in his country, had constantly to contend with a large reactionary faction which included a majority of the rases, and border skirmishes not infrequently occurred between wandering Ethiopian bands and their African neighbors in the adjoining possessions of European powers. Slavery, too, although condemned by the government at Addis Ababa, continued to flourish in outlying districts. Despite these facts, Ethiopia was admitted to the League of Nations in 1925, under the sponsorship of France, supported by Italy. After that time, in accordance with pledges made to the League, Haile Selassie increased his efforts to suppress both slavery and the use of arms by his irresponsible subjects, and, by 1935, a considerable improvement was noticeable in these matters.

Great Britain, France, and Italy all had important economic interests in Ethiopia. For Great Britain, these interests centered about Lake Tsana and the possible construction there of a dam which would increase the water supply necessary for Egypt's summer crops of cotton, sugar, and rice, and for the agricultural development of the Sudan. For France, the main point of emphasis in Ethiopia was the zone surrounding the French railroad from Jibuti, in French Somaliland, to Addis Ababa - a road which was highly profitable to France, since it furnished Ethiopia's chief outlet to the sea. For Italy, the stakes in Ethiopia were perhaps even more significant, since the lands of Haile Selassie, lying directly between the two Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, contained natural resources which Italy lacked. In 1896 Italy actually attempted to secure domination of Ethiopia by force of arms, but the Italian attack of that year was re-

pulsed by a disastrous defeat at Adowa, and Ethiopia continued to lead its precarious existence as an independent state.

In 1906, Great Britain, France, and Italy concluded a treaty specifically defining their respective spheres of influence in Ethiopia (1) and agreeing on common action in the kingdom of the Negus. In 1926, Italy obtained from Britain consent to the proposal that, in return for Italian support of British efforts to secure the concession for constructing a dam at Lake Tsana and a motor road from the Sudan to the dam, Britain would support Italy's request for the right to construct and operate a railway (2) connecting Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Action under this agreement, however, was dropped in July 1926, as a result of French claims that the 1906 treaty forbade interference in Ethiopia except by agreement of all the signatories of the treaty, and of Ethiopian protest to the League with regard to a joint Anglo-Italian "attempt to exert pressure." (3) (4)

France, which in 1926 was unfavorable toward an extension of Italian influence in Ethiopia, changed its views as early as the opening month of 1935, as a result of German developments which made Franco-Italian rapprochement particularly desirable. On January 7 of that year, France and Italy concluded the Rome Accord. The terms of this agreement have never been completely disclosed, but its conclusion apparently marked the burial of outstanding grievances between the two countries, and traded African concessions from France to Italy, in return for Italy's promise

(1) Quoted from British and Foreign State Papers, 1903-1906, v. 99, p. 486, by Koren, William, Jr., "Imperialist Rivalries in Ethiopia," Foreign Policy Reports, September 11, 1935, p. 174.

(2) League of Nations, Treaty Series, v. 50, no. 1211.

(3) Woolbert, Robert C., "Italy in Abyssinia," Foreign Affairs, April 1936, pp. 502-503.

(4) Ibid., quoted from League Document C.428.N.161.1926.VII

(5)

to support French policies in the troubled arena of central Europe.

Not only did international conditions in 1935 incline France to leniency in judging Italian projects in Africa, but also the internal problems with which the government at Paris had to cope at that time were such as to dictate a very cautious foreign policy. The country was suffering from the economic depression which had run its course earlier in other sections of the world. Unemployment, which had been alarming to the French in 1934, was listed in January 1935 as 46% greater than it had been twelve months before.

(6)

Industrial production was declining and bankruptcies were increasing. The index of stock quotations showed a downward trend. The French franc was feeling the effect of the devaluation of the British pound and the American dollar. Discontent was rife in the nation from one end to the other, and a rapid succession of ministries reflected the unstable political situation. The Flandin group, which came into power in November 1934, failed on May 30, 1935 to get a vote of confidence, and was succeeded on May 31 by the Bouisson government, which lasted only four days. On June 7, Pierre Laval formed a ministry, retaining for himself the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, and this cabinet received a vote of confidence on June 8, although a large Left wing in the Parliament was openly hostile to its policies. There were whispers abroad that the French stage was being set for a

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Fascist dictator, and in the midst of such economic and political difficulties, the Quai d'Orsay tended to a "safety first" policy in foreign affairs.

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(5) For a discussion of the probable terms of this agreement, see Teynbee, Arnold J., Survey Of International Affairs, 1935, v. II, "Italy And Abyssinia," pp. 103-108.

(6) Webb, Horton, "French Business Fights For Normalcy," Current History, January 1935, p. 423.

(7) Riots and youth demonstrations, inspired by Col. de la Rocque's Croix de Fer movement, were the subject of numerous articles at this period.



Two factors might have argued for French support of Ethiopia in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict: first, the distasteful prospect of weakening Franco-British ties; and, second, the danger of dealing a crippling blow to the League of Nations. These considerations were counterbalanced, however, by the peril which Paris believed to be inherent in jeopardizing the newly achieved Franco-Italian friendship, and by the government's unwillingness to undertake any obligations which might intensify the nation's economic fears. All of these factors were viewed by the Quai d'Orsay primarily in the light of their bearing upon the German situation and its relation to French security. In this connection, the efficacy of the League as an instrument of collective security was undoubtedly weakened in the eyes of the French by the fact that the League confined itself merely to a deplorative resolution on the occasion of Hitler's repudiation of his treaty obligations in the spring of 1935. At the same time the link between France and Britain was weakened by the British disposition to accept Hitler's policies and by the conclusion of the Anglo-German naval treaty in June 1935. There was ample cause in these developments for a French dilemma in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

For Great Britain, however, the Italo-Ethiopian controversy was an instance in which practical considerations of empire and idealistic support of the League system coincided. Mention has already been made of

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- (8) Hitler's re-armament of Germany, announced in March 1935 in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, resulted only in a League resolution of remonstrance. (League of Nations, Official Journal, May 1935, pp. 551-552).
- (9) Vizetelly, Frank H., and associates, The New International Year Book, 1935, p. 281: "On June 18 the Reich scored a notable diplomatic triumph by concluding a naval agreement with Britain, in which Hitler agreed to limit the proposed German fleet to 35% of British naval tonnage.....thus giving official recognition to Germany's violation of the Versailles Treaty..." This Anglo-German naval agreement aroused deep resentment in France.

(10)

British interests in Lake Tsana. There was also the fact that Great Britain, with millions of African Negro subjects, could not fail to view with alarm any conflict in East Africa which might arouse Negro subjects in neighboring provinces. There was, further, the possibility that Italian success in Ethiopia might challenge British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. For these reasons, London was bound to resist the Italian attempt to annex the dominions of Haile Selassie. Prime Minister Baldwin, moreover, was aware that public opinion in Britain would support a strong stand on the part of his government at Geneva. In March 1934, a private enterprise, known as the British National Peace Ballot, had been undertaken in England by the League of Nations Union in collaboration with other organizations of a semi-public character. The returns from this ballot, compiled in 1935 and reflecting the thinking of more than 37.9% of the total voting population in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, showed an overwhelming majority of voters not only approving Britain's membership in the League, but also expressing their belief that the League should use economic and even military measures, if necessary, to compel an aggressor nation to cease its advances against its

(11)

victim. In view of this demonstration on the part of the British people, and in consideration of Britain's particular interests in the Italo-Ethiopian affair, the year 1935 was a time when the British government might well wish to cement the bonds of international co-operation and strengthen the Geneva machinery for dealing with cases of military aggression.

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(10) For a full discussion of this important point, consult Langer, William L., "The Struggle For The Nile," Foreign Affairs, January 1936, pp. 258-273.

(11) A complete description of the Peace Ballot and its results is given by Teynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v.II., pp. 51-52.

Because of the very definite interests which Britain, France, and Italy had in Ethiopia, and because, by the treaty of 1906, these powers had committed themselves to a united front in their Ethiopian policies, it is clear that an act of aggression against Ethiopia by any one of the three would have been a matter of particular concern for the other two. It was probably for this reason that the League of Nations looked especially to Britain and France for leadership in the settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy. But it is obvious that, in 1935, there were factors which made it highly improbable that Britain and France would see eye to eye in the matter of dealing with Italy as an aggressor nation in Africa.

## Chapter II - The League And The Early Stages Of The Italo-Ethiopian Dispute.

Rival border patrols of Italy and Ethiopia clashed on December 5, 1934 at Walwal, in the province of Ogaden, a region of grazing lands in the vicinity of the ill-defined boundary line between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. In this encounter the Ethiopians listed 107 killed and 45 wounded, while the Italians reported "considerable losses" among their native troops. The incident appeared to have been precipitated by the arrival in the disputed Walwal area on November 23, 1934 of the joint Anglo-Ethiopian Commission for the Delimitation of the Frontier between Ethiopia and British Somaliland. This commission, in the course of its survey of the pasture lands in the Ethiopian province of Ogaden, found Walwal occupied by an Italian native force. After various incidents, the commission withdrew on November 25, leaving behind its Ethiopian military escort. The Walwal engagement took place on December 5 between this escort and the Italian troops in occupation of the district. Other incidents followed, and the two governments, disputing the ownership of the region in question, mutually accused each other of responsibility.

The resulting tension between Italy and Ethiopia was announced on December 14 to the League by a telegram from the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, who informed the Secretary-General that the Anglo-Ethiopian Commission had been prevented by Italian military force from continuing its work, and that on December 5 the escort of the commission had been attacked "without provocation" by Italian troops. The Ethiopian govern-

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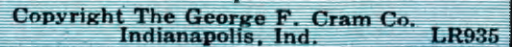
(12) Also given "Ual Ual." See map on the following page.

(13) See map on the following page for location of this region.

(14) League of Nations, Official Journal (hereafter cited O.J.), Feb. 1935, p. 255.

(15) *Ibid.*, p. 249.

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 274.





ment, according to its Foreign Minister, invoked immediately Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Amity, dated August 2, 1928, which provided (17) for arbitration in the case of frontier incidents. According to the Italian government, however, the Walwal incident was a sudden and unprovoked attack by Ethiopians upon an Italian post, and Italy therefore refused to admit that there was any question to arbitrate. (18) Reparations in the form of apologies, a salute to the Italian flag, punishment of offenders, and compensation for the dead and wounded were demanded by Italy as prerequisites to any discussion of the affair.

Ethiopia insisted that arbitration was possible on the following two points: first, that "there was an Italian aggression at Walwal and three days later in the interior of the Ogaden;" and, second, that "Walwal is Ethiopian territory illegally occupied by Italian troops." In support of the latter contention, the Ethiopian government cited the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1908, which, Ethiopia claimed, defined the frontier between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland in such a way as to place Walwal 100 kilometers within the Ethiopian boundary. Italy, on the other hand, claimed that Walwal belonged to Somaliland and had been occupied for several years by Italian troops.

Strained relations between the two countries were aggravated by mutual criticism of policies prior to the Walwal encounter. Italy represented the affair as the most serious of "a lengthy series of attacks carried out...with a view to disputing, by means of threatening acts, the legality of the presence of Italian detachments in certain frontier localities." (20) Ethiopia,

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(17) See p. 44.

(18) O. J. February 1935, p. 249.

(19) Ibid., p. 249.

(20) Ibid., p. 251.

on the contrary, attributed the incident to the "Italian policy of gradual  
(21)  
encroachment."

The controversy grew steadily worse as the year 1934 drew to a close. Ethiopia alleged that, following the Walwal incident, there were various Italian military operations in the disputed area, while Italy denied these assertions. On January 3, 1935, the Ethiopian government re-  
(22)  
ported "an aggression against the Ethiopian garrison at Gerlogubi," and re-  
(23)  
quested the League, in accordance with Article 11 of the Covenant, to take every measure to safeguard peace.

The League, however, took little direct notice of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. It seems to have expected that the affair would be settled under the terms of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928, or that Great Britain and France, as the powers most interested, would be able to exert sufficient friendly pressure upon Italy to prevent open aggression. Throughout the first nine months of 1935, while Mussolini rushed military preparations for the African campaign, the League contented itself with the appointment of successive committees to study various aspects of the situation.

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(21)Op. cit., p. 251.

(22)Ibid., p. 252.

(23) "Covenant of the League of Nations.

"Article 11

"Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. In case such an emergency should arise, the Secretary-General shall, on the request of any Member of the League, forthwith summon a meeting of the Council.

"It is also declared to be the friendly right of each Member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends."

According to a correspondence filed with the League, Italy and Ethiopia agreed, in January 1935, to appoint a commission for arbitration of the Walwal incident, provided agreement could not first be reached (24) through direct negotiations. In April, Italy reluctantly consented to the formation of such a commission, although the Italian government refused to admit that recourse to the regular diplomatic channels had been exhausted. (25) Ethiopia, however, was eager to see the commission constituted, because Addis Ababa contended that in the matter of direct negotiations Italy had "proceeded by way of injunctions," and had further complicated the situation (26) by dispatching troops and war materials to the vicinity of the difficulty. Pending the contemplated arbitration, the Ethiopian government urged the League to investigate these Italian preparations for war. Italy explained that the dispatch of troops to East Africa had been required for the protection of Italian colonies in that region, and that this defensive action had been dictated by Ethiopia's attitude and by the abnormal conditions (27) still existing on the frontiers.

The action of the League in the spring of 1935, perhaps due to the fact that Germany's denunciation of the Versailles Treaty overshadowed other matters at Geneva, was limited to a Council resolution of May 25, which set a time limit of three months for the settlement of the dispute by arbitration. (28) The Council was to meet again on August 25 if by that date no settlement of the affair had been reached. Meanwhile, the Council noted that the two governments were in agreement in permitting the arbitrators to settle not only the dispute over the Walwal incident, but also other disputes which

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(24) O. J. February 1935, p. 162.

(25) O. J. May 1935, p. 571.

(26) Ibid., p. 572.

(27) Ibid., p. 573.

(28) O. J. June 1935, p. 640.



had arisen since December 5 as a result of further frontier incidents.

The Italian government waived its original objection to the non-Ethiopian nationality of the arbitrators appointed by Haile Selassie and the commission was ready, in April 1935, to begin its work. As members, the two countries appointed the following men: Italy - Count Aldrovani, Ambassador of His Majesty the King of Italy, and M. Montagna, Counsellor of State for the Kingdom of Italy; Ethiopia - M. A. de Geouffre de la Pradelle, Professor of International Law at the University of Paris, and Mr. Pitman B. Potter, Professor of International Organization at the Graduate Institute of International Studies at Geneva. Attached to the commission as agents of the two governments were M. S. Lessona, Professor at the University of Florence, and M. C. Jese, Professor at the University of Paris.

The work of this commission was halted in June by disagreement of the members as to their competence to examine the question of "ownership" of the territory in which Walwal is situated. The League Council, to which appeal was made, decided that since the two governments did not agree to examination of their frontier questions, the commission would be "prejudging the solution of questions which do not fall within its province" if it based its findings "on the opinion that the place at which the incident occurred is under the sovereignty of either Italy or Ethiopia."<sup>(29)</sup>

The commission, thus deprived of the opportunity of going to the root of the matter, met again in Paris, on August 20, and designated as a fifth arbitrator, whose services were required because of the commission's inability to agree on certain factors, M. Politis, Greek Minister

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(29) O. J. August 1935, p. 968.

at Paris and ex-President of the League Assembly. With the aid of M. Politis, the commission reached a unanimous decision, which was submitted to the Council on September 3, 1935, and which concluded:

"(I) That neither the Italian Government nor its agents on the spot can be held responsible in any way for the actual Walwal incident; the allegations brought against them by the Ethiopian Government are disproved in particular by the many precautions taken by them to prevent any incident.....

"(II) That, although the Ethiopian Government had no reasonable interest in provoking the engagement, its local authorities, by their attitude and particularly by the concentration and maintenance, after the departure of the Anglo-Ethiopian Commission, of numerous troops in the proximity of the Italian line at Walwal, may have given the impression that they had aggressive intentions....but that nevertheless it had not been shown that they can be held responsible for the actual incident of December 5."

With regard to incidents subsequent to December 5, the commission was "of the opinion that, in respect of these minor incidents, no international responsibility need be involved."

The report of the arbitration commission did not put an end to the Italo-Ethiopian controversy. Ethiopia charged that throughout the spring and summer months of 1935 Italy sent to East Africa "troops and munitions of war in large quantities, and that it accompanied these dispatches with inflammatory harangues and speeches full of threats to Ethiopia's independence and integrity." Furthermore, according to Ethiopian allegation, Italian newspapers were "constantly publishing reports of frontier incidents, with the manifest intention of disturbing relations between Italy and Ethiopia." On June 20, Ethiopia requested that the Council send neutral observers at Ethiopia's expense to inspect the frontier districts, but on this request the Council took no action.

Italy, meanwhile, multiplied its accusations and increased its demands upon Ethiopia. The kingdom of Haile Selassie was now charged with violating its treaty obligations, with failing to live up to the promises

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(30) O. J. November 1935, p. 1355.

(31) O. J. August 1935, p. 972.

it had made when it joined the League, and with constituting a menace to neighboring Italian colonies. In September 1935, at the opening of the League Council's session, Baron Aloisi, the Italian representative, presented a long and elaborately prepared memorandum on the Ethiopian situation. This document, which reviewed internal conditions in the African country with particular emphasis upon slavery, suggested by implication that the Council should expel Ethiopia from League membership. Italy, meanwhile, reserved the right of "full liberty of action, with the view to adopting all measures that prove necessary for the security of her colonies and for safeguarding her own interests."

M. Jaze, Ethiopia's representative, said that he heard "with great surprise the indictment of Ethiopia by the Italian representative," and that he wished to "protest most strongly." He called attention to the fact that, since the Walwal incident had been decided in such a way as to exonerate Ethiopia from responsibility for it, this incident could no longer furnish a basis for Italian action. Such action, nevertheless, was continuing. He urged the Council to examine the situation without delay, since the question was "whether in a few days a war of extermination will be opened."

During the month of August preceding the Council session in which the Italian memorandum was presented, tri-partite discussions with regard to the Italo-Ethiopian controversy had taken place in Paris between the representatives of Great Britain, France, and Italy. A report of this Three Power Conference was made to the Council by Mr. Anthony Eden, the British representative, on September 4, the same day on which Baron Aloisi pre-

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(32) O. J. November 1935, pp. 1347-1416.

(33) Ibid., p. 1139.

(34)

sented his indictment of Ethiopia. From Mr. Eden's report it was evident that no solution to the dispute had been reached. It appeared that the Italian delegate at the Paris conference, after having stated a number of complaints against Ethiopia, had laid special emphasis upon the political and economic interests of his country in Ethiopia, and had stated that no agreement could be reached unless these interests were properly considered. The delegates from Britain and France, attempting to take into consideration the Italian claims, had drawn up a program of reorganization to be effected in Ethiopia with the assistance of an international commission, and had arranged for particular concessions to Italy under the reorganized regime in Ethiopia; but the proposed reforms had been rejected by the Italian government.

It was evident to the League Council that negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian differences had failed. Therefore, acting on the request of Ethiopia that the Council make the necessary decisions for fulfilling its "mission under Article 15, paragraph 3," (35) the President proposed on September 6 that a Committee of Five be appointed to make a general examination of Italo-Ethiopian relations. Such a committee was appointed, its members including the representatives of Britain, France, Poland, Spain, and Turkey.

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(34) Op. cit., pp. 1133-1134.

(35) Ibid., p. 1138.

"Covenant of the League of Nations  
"Article 15

Paragraph 3

"The Council shall endeavor to effect a settlement of the dispute and, if such efforts are successful, a statement shall be made public giving such facts and explanations regarding the dispute and the terms of settlement thereof as the Council may deem appropriate."

This Committee of Five reported to the Council on September 26 that they have made suggestions to Italy and Ethiopia which were similar in character to those made by the Anglo-French delegates at the Three Power Conference in Paris. Once more international assistance to Ethiopia, this time as a recommendation of the Committee of Five, was suggested as a solution which might be acceptable to both parties. The independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia would be respected; Italy, however, would be given the opportunity to resume relations with Ethiopia in security upon a basis of understanding and collaboration. The governments of France and Britain agreed to recognize a special Italian interest in the economic development of Ethiopia, and it was intimated also that these two powers would facilitate, by common sacrifices, territorial adjustments between Italy and Ethiopia.

(36)

These suggestions of the Committee of Five were accepted by Ethiopia as a basis of negotiation, but were rejected by Italy on the fact that no attention had been paid by the committee to Italian charges that Ethiopia, by reason of her failure to meet treaty obligations and fulfill promises made to the League regarding slavery, was unworthy of consideration on a basis of equality with other League members. Italy, in summary, felt "obliged to demonstrate the impossibility of any agreement, even economic, with Ethiopia, in view of that country's incapacity to enter into, and still less to respect, international agreements of any kind whatever."<sup>(37)</sup>

On receiving this information, the Council entrusted to a committee consisting of all the members of the Council except the party involved (the Committee of Thirteen) the task of drafting a report with

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(36) League Document C.411(1).M.297(1).1935.VII, pp. 16-20.

(37) Ibid., pp. 20-21.

(38)

regard to the application of Article 15, paragraph 4, of the Covenant. The Committee of Five remained in existence, however, for the purpose of judging whether a further attempt at conciliation might be justifiable. In other words, although the first step had been taken in a coercive program, the Council was careful not to close the door of conciliation against Italy.

On October 2, three days before the Committee of Thirteen made its report, Mussolini addressed 20,000,000 Italians in a speech that was broadcast throughout the world. The keynote of this address was the "irresistible" destiny of Italy and the complete loss of Italian patience with Ethiopia. The day after this speech, Italian troops invaded Haile Selassie's empire from the north, east, and south. The "war of extermination" had begun, despite the fact that when the Fascist legions marched into Ethiopia Mussolini was violating four treaties to which Italy was a signatory: the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Amity of 1928, and the Treaty of 1906 between Britain, France, and Italy with regard to their Ethiopian interests.

It was in an atmosphere of great international concern, therefore, that the Committee of Thirteen delivered its report at Geneva on  
(39)  
October 5. This report reviewed the history of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy and reached the conclusion that, while incidents had occurred

(38)

"Covenant of the League of Nations  
"Article 15

Paragraph 4

"If the dispute is not thus settled, the Council, either unanimously or by a majority vote, shall make and publish a report containing a statement of the facts of the dispute and the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto."

(39) League Document C.411(1).M.207(1).1935.VII, pp. 14-15.

from time to time along Ethiopia's frontiers, they were not in the nature of aggression by Ethiopia, and had never been brought to the attention of the Council by any one of the states which had neighboring territories in Africa. It was further pointed out that the states in 1923 which had supported Ethiopia's candidacy for admission to the League, of which states Italy was admittedly one, had known at the time of internal conditions in Ethiopia and that these conditions since then had improved rather than deteriorated. The committee also pointed out that in the present controversy Ethiopia had sought a peaceful settlement from the beginning, that it had requested League co-operation in its domestic reorganization, and that it had accepted the proposals of the Committee of Five. Italy, on the other hand, had rejected all proposals for a peaceful settlement of the affair.

Following the report of the Committee of Thirteen, the President of the Council stated that "in view of the important statements we have just heard and of the serious facts that have been brought to our notice," he proposed to appoint a Committee of Six, whose members were to enable the Council to "take decisions with a full knowledge of the facts." (40) His proposal was adopted, and the Committee of Six was formed, its members including the representatives of Britain, Chile, Denmark, France, Portugal, and Rumania.

The Committee of Six reported on October 7 that it had "come" (41) to the conclusion that the Italian Government has resorted to war in

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(40) O. J. November 1935, p. 1213.

(41) Ibid., p. 1225.

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disregard of its covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant of the League."

This direct and unvarnished indictment of an aggressor nation was unani-

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mously adopted by the members of the Council, exclusive of Italy. Ten months after its inception, the Italo-Ethiopian controversy had resolved itself into a conflict between Italy and the other members of the League.

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"Covenant of the League of Nations

"Article 12

"The Members of the League agree that, if there should arise between them any dispute likely to lead to a rupture, they will submit the matter either to arbitration or to inquiry by the Council, and they agree in no case to resort to war until three months after the award by the arbitrators or the report by the Council.

"In any case under this article the award of the arbitrators shall be made within a reasonable time, and the report of the Council shall be made within six months after the submission of the dispute."

(43) O. J. November 1935, p. 1235.



### Chapter III - The League Applies Sanctions.

The League Assembly met on October 9, 1935. At this time the verdict of the Council that Italy had "resorted to war in disregard of its covenants" was presented to the body of nations for approval. Members of the Assembly who opposed the Council decision were asked to speak; silence would be interpreted as assent to the indictment of Italy. The representatives of three nations, Albania, Austria, and Hungary, spoke in Italy's behalf. With the exception of these countries, all the states, fifty-one in number, concurred, by their silence, in the finding of the Council. Italy thereupon became subject to the penalties which might be imposed under (44) Article 16 of the Covenant of the League.

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#### "Covenant of the League of Nations

##### "Article 16

"Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13, or 15, it shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial, or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

"It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League.

"The Members of the League agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this Article, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the covenant-breaking State, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the Members of the League which are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League.

"Any Member of the League which has violated any covenant of the League may be declared to be no longer a Member of the League by a vote of the Council concurred in by the Representatives of all the other Members of the League represented thereon."

To recommend to the individual nations suitable measures to be taken under Article 16, a Co-ordination Committee, composed of one delegate from each of the League states except the two nations at war, was set up by the Assembly. This committee, at its first meeting, on October 11, 1935, elected as its chairman Senhor de Vasconcellos, of Portugal, and then appointed a "Little Co-ordination Committee" to do the actual work of drafting sanctions. The "Little Co-ordination Committee," afterward known as the Committee of Eighteen, included, in addition to Chairman Vasconcellos ex officio, one representative from each of the following states: Britain, France, Canada, the Union of South Africa, Argentina, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the U.S.S.R., and Mexico.

On October 11, the Committee of Eighteen proposed an embargo on  
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all arms shipments to Italy, including in this proposal the lifting of all restrictions previously adopted by League members on arms shipments to Ethiopia. On October 14, a measure to ban loans and the extension of credit  
(46)  
to Italy was voted, and on October 19, three other proposals were adopted. The first of these, sponsored by Great Britain, prohibited importation by League members of all goods coming directly or indirectly from Italy - a measure which, it was estimated, would cut off 70% of Italian exports and  
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deprive Italy of its principal source of foreign currency. The second proposal, supported by France, placed an embargo on the shipment to Italy of  
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all raw materials essential for war purposes. It was expected that this action would further reduce Italy's chance of purchasing war materials

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(45) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, "Proposals And Resolutions Of The Co-ordination Committee And The Committee of Eighteen", p. 2.

(46) Ibid., p. 4.

(47) Ibid., p. 6.

(48) Ibid., p. 9.

abroad, but cotton, copper, petroleum, and the finished products of iron and rubber were not designated among the prohibited purchases. Senor de Madariaga, the Spanish delegate, called attention to these incongruities, but the French and British delegates explained that only products controlled by members of the League had been included in the list, and that, therefore, iron ore and raw rubber had been included, but that the finished products of these commodities, because they were not controlled by League members, had not been included. (49) The proposal was accepted as it stood. The third proposal adopted on October 19 was a pledge of mutual assistance by League members to minimize the economic losses which would be suffered by the nations as a result of applying sanctions against Italy. (50) Under this measure the signatories agreed to try to replace imports from Italy with imports from the states which would suffer most from the loss of the Italian market, states such as Rumania and Yugoslavia, in particular. Furthermore, League members would practice discrimination against countries such as Albania, Austria, and Hungary, which stood to profit by their refusal to apply sanctions against Italy.

These recommendations of the Committee of Eighteen were transmitted to the individual governments for their approval and comments, (51) and the sanctions did not go into effect until November 18. One reason for the delay, apparently, was the fact that peace negotiations were being secretly carried on between Rome, Paris, and London. Reports of such negotiations were denied at the time, but it seems that they did take place, on the basis of a peace plan produced at Paris by a Franco-British pair of experts.

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(49) O. J. Special Supplement No. 145, pp. 79-80.

(50) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, p. 11.

(51) Ibid., the entire document.

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M. de St. Quentin and Mr. Peterson. No agreement was reached through this means, however, and eventually the nations were obliged to proceed with sanctions.

Meanwhile, from October 31 to November 6, the Co-ordination Committee held its second session. The purpose of this session was to examine the replies of individual countries with regard to their reception of the recommended sanctions. In the process of this examination two very interesting developments appeared, the question of the famous "mandate" to France and Britain and the question of extending the sanctions to include petroleum.

It was the Prime Minister of Belgium, M. van Zeeland, who proposed to the Co-ordination Committee that Britain and France should actually be given a "mandate" to effect a settlement between Italy and Ethiopia. Said

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M. van Zeeland:

"Since the responsible leaders of two great countries have already devoted a large part of their time and their talents to this task, why should not the League entrust to them the mission of seeking, under its auspices and control and in the spirit of the Covenant, the elements of a solution which the three parties at issue - the League, Italy, and Ethiopia - might find it possible to accept?"

Since the Polish delegate pointed out that the Council was "the

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(52) Dean, Vera Michales, "The Quest For Ethiopian Peace," Foreign Policy Reports, February 26, 1936, pp. 318-319:

"It would appear.....that on October 16 Signor Cerruti, Italian Ambassador in Paris, gave M. Laval the outline of a settlement acceptable to Mussolini, and that the French Prime Minister conveyed this information to the British Government.... Mussolini's proposals were examined in Paris by Mr. Maurice Peterson, head of the Abyssinian department of the British Foreign Office, and his French colleague, M. de St. Quentin..."  
 Toynbee, Arnold J., Survey Of International Affairs, 1935, v.II, p. 282:

"....A rumour that M. Laval, at a meeting with the British Ambassador...had communicated to him some Italian peace terms... was officially denied... The Paris correspondent of The Daily Herald reported that....M. de St. Quentin and Mr. Peterson had produced in Paris a peace plan....."

(53) O. J. Special Supplement No. 146, p. 9.

(54)  
only body competent to deal with the substance of the problem," the Belgian proposal was not put to a vote, and no formal mandate was conferred by the Co-ordination Committee. The Chairman of the Committee did state, however, that "the members note the hope expressed by the first delegate of Belgium (55) and give it their full approval." This incident was to give rise to the Hoare-Laval negotiations which were to be an important chapter in later developments.

The proposal to extend the League embargo against Italy to petroleum came from the Canadian delegate, Mr. Riddell, who, on November 2, suggested that the sanctions be enlarged to cover "petroleum and its derivatives, coal, iron, cast iron, and steel." (56) It may be assumed that this action of the representative from Canada was a source of embarrassment not only to some of the other committee members, but also to his own government. (57) Nevertheless, his proposal, referred by the Committee of Eighteen to the Economic Sub-Committee, and by them to a drafting committee, was finally adopted as "Proposal No. 4A", and was included in the circular letter of (58) November 7 which went out from the Secretary-General to the various states.

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(54) Op. cit., p. 11.

(55) Ibid., p. 12.

(56) Ibid., p. 38.

(57) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v. II, p. 274:

"On the 1st of December the Canadian Acting Premier, Mr. Lapointe, declared that Mr. Riddell's proposal merely represented his personal opinion and that the Canadian Government had not taken the initiative in any such action. A few days later it was announced that Mr. Riddell would not continue to serve on the Committee of Eighteen as he had been appointed a delegate to the Pan-American Labour Conference at Santiago de Chile. This belated disavowal of Mr. Riddell aroused considerable opposition in Canada....."

(58) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150., p. 10.

In the two developments outlined above, the possibility of a "mandate" to Britain and France to effect an Italo-Ethiopian peace and the possibility of an oil sanction against Italy, the appearance of two divergent trends in League policy is to be noted. If the mandate idea were pursued, a bargain with Italy was likely to be arranged in the interests of European peace at the expense of a small nation. If the oil sanction were pursued, the war with Ethiopia was likely to be brought to an end at the price of Italy's hostility to the League states. Either policy might, in the end, prove to be worth the price, but both policies could not be effectively followed at the same time. This was a fact which must have been evident to the statesmen at Geneva, but it seems to have been ignored. Instead of choosing between two courses of action, the League embarked upon both.

From the very beginning this paradoxical attitude of the League proved to be of immense advantage to the Italians. While the statesmen argued, the Fascist troops pushed more deeply into Ethiopia. The advance of General de Bono, the Italian commander in Northern Ethiopia, was almost uninterrupted during the first six weeks of the conflict. On October 6 his troops captured Adowa, the scene of the Italian disaster of 1896, and on October 15 the Holy City of Axum surrendered to his army without struggle. Following the fall of these psychologically important points, General de Bono was replaced in the Italian command, on November 16, by Marshal Badoglio. There was perhaps a studied cunning in this appointment, since Marshal Badoglio's reputation as a soldier was well-known in Europe, and (59) was a matter of particular respect on the part of the French. With this general in command, the Italian advance was likely to be even more rapid

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(59) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v. II, p290: ".....in the opinion of the French General Staff, Badoglio was the best soldier alive in Europe."

in Northern Ethiopia. Meanwhile, General Graziani's troops in Southern Ethiopia were pushing toward Harrar, the second city in importance in the empire.

By December 12, the Secretary-General of the League had been informed by the governments of ten members of the League that they would be willing to place an oil embargo upon Italy. These states included Argentina, British India, Czechoslovakia, Iraq, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Rumania, Siam, and the U.S.S.R. Four of these states - Iraq, the Netherlands, Rumania, and the U.S.S.R. - were estimated, as a group, to be furnishing 74.3% of Italy's petroleum supply in 1935, although they controlled only 18.7% of the world's supply of petroleum for that year. The United States of America, a non-member of the League, was producing 59.1% of the world's petroleum supply, but for the first nine months of 1935 (the space of time covered by the League report) had furnished only 6.3% of Italy's petroleum products. Although the United States government did not commit itself definitely to a promise of an oil embargo, the League had been informed by the Secretary of State that measures were being taken to prevent an increased trade with Italy in this and in other commodities. The difficulty in the path of the oil sanction, therefore, seems to have been, not the attitude of League members or non-members which controlled substantial fractions of the world's oil supply, but the attitude of certain Great Powers which were determined to conciliate Italy and maintain the peace in Europe. These powers were France and Britain, with France taking the lead.

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(60) O. J. Special Supplement No. 148, pp. 82-84.

(61) Ibid.

(62) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 315-321.

M. Laval, acting under pressure from Italy, appears to have  
 (63)  
 begun a campaign for defeating the oil sanction in November 1935. At that  
 time there was a furore in the Italian press on the subject of the possible  
 petroleum embargo, and there were rumors that Signor Cerruti, Italian  
 Ambassador at Paris, had informed M. Laval that such an embargo would pre-  
 cipitate a crisis, perhaps a European war. At the same time there were  
 (64)  
 references in Rome to troop movements, the inference being that Mussolini  
 (65)  
 would re-fortify the Alps on the French border. It was at this juncture  
 that Senhor de Vasconcellos announced, on November 22, that the Committee  
 of Eighteen would meet on November 29 to discuss the replies received from  
 the various nations regarding Proposal No. 4A. Immediately M. Laval  
 begged a postponement of the meeting, explaining that parliamentary engage-  
 (66)  
 ments in Paris would make his attendance impossible on the date announced.  
 Accordingly, Senhor de Vasconcellos set December 12 as the date for the  
 convening of the Committee of Eighteen.

On November 30, certain members of the Committee of Eighteen  
 were informed verbally at Geneva by Signor Bova Scuppa, Secretary of the  
 Italian delegation, that adoption of Proposal No. 4A would be considered by  
 (67)  
 the Italian government as "an unfriendly act."

On December 7, Sir Samuel Hoare, in poor health and bound for a  
 vacation, stopped in Paris for a brief conversation with M. Laval. This con-  
 versation resulted in the Hoare-Laval Plan. Just what precoded this deal is  
 uncertain, but it seems probable that M. Laval told Sir Samuel that Signor  
 Cerruti had intimated an Italian attack upon the British fleet in the

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(63) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., p. 277.

(64) Dean, Vera Micheles, op. cit., p. 323 and p. 324.

(65) Ibid., p. 324.

(66) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., p. 278 and p. 279.

(67) Ibid., p. 280.



(68)

Mediterranean, if the oil sanction were adopted. It seems also probable that M. Laval added that, in such an event, there would be some uncertainty of French support for Britain. At any rate, Sir Samuel was obviously frightened into signing a proposition which amounted to handing over to Italy about half of Ethiopia. This arrangement, based upon plans made earlier by M. de St. Quentin and Mr. Peterson, was proposed in two parts, (69) called "Exchange of Territory" and "Zone of Economic Expansion and Settlement." The first part would permit Italy to annex all the territory in Northern Ethiopia which had been conquered by Italian military forces, except the city of Axum. In return, Italy would cede to Ethiopia a tiny strip of Eritrea as an outlet to the sea. The second part of the agreement applied to Southern Ethiopia, and provided for extensive concessions to Italy in a zone not yet conquered by force of arms.

These suggestions were completed in Paris on December 8, and transmitted to London by Mr. Peterson. Sir Samuel continued on his way to a holiday in Switzerland, apparently confident that his activities would remain secret until they were examined by the British government. (70) As a matter of fact, however, French newspapers on the very next morning carried detailed accounts of the bargain, so that Mr. Peterson and the publicized version arrived at approximately the same time on Downing Street. Immediately a storm of adverse criticism broke upon the two authors of the plan. Since M. Laval was his own Prime Minister, he had the situation somewhat better in hand than his unfortunate colleague, Sir Samuel, who was the object of bitter criticism in the House of Commons. Eventually Sir Samuel was sacrificed to public opinion and was succeeded in the office of Foreign

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(68) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., p. 292.

(69) Ibid., pp. 295-300.

(70) Ibid., p. 301.

Secretary by Mr. Edon. M. Laval temporarily outrode the storm in France.

The Committee of Eighteen met, as scheduled, on December 12, but, it may be assumed, in an atmosphere of confusion, because with the results of the Hoare-Laval Plan still unknown, continued discussion of Proposal No. 4A was rendered pointless. Pending the outcome of the plan, which had been communicated only the day before to the two belligerents and to the Secretary-General of the League, it was proposed that all further consideration of the oil sanction be deferred. The Committee of Eighteen therefore adjourned on December 13. France was successful, at least for the time being, in warding off a really stringent measure against Italy.

Ethiopia, not unnaturally, did not agree to the Hoare-Laval  
(71) Plan. Mussolini, having kept quiet until December 18, on that day made it clear that he, too, scorned the plan which had already been refused by his adversary and repudiated by public opinion in both Britain and France. (72)

On December 19, the League Council adopted a resolution instructing the Committee of Thirteen to examine the Italo-Ethiopian situation as a whole. (73) This committee temporarily superseded the Committee of Eighteen in importance. There remained nothing for the Committee of Eighteen to do, except, as Chairman de Vasconcellos remarked to his colleagues on December 19, "to follow the application of the sanctions in force and...to remain in touch with the Chairman of the Committee of Thirteen with regard to the next meeting of the Committee of Eighteen." (74)

Amid this multiplicity of committees, the oil sanction was lost, and Mussolini's troops continued to advance while Geneva did nothing.

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(71) O. J. January 1936, pp. 41-42.

(72) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v. II, p. 312.

(73) O. J. January 1936, p. 14.

(74) O. J. Special Supplement No. 147, p. 11.

On January 20, 1936, the Committee of Thirteen met to discuss the Italo-Ethiopian affair for the first time since December 19. At this time a report was drawn up, submitted to the Council on January 23, and adopted by that body in the presence of, but without the concurrence of, (75) the Italian representative. This report began with the words, "The war is continuing in Ethiopian territory," but proposed nothing to be done about the situation. Instead, it went on to explain that the Ethiopian request for financial assistance could not be complied with because the Convention for Financial Assistance to which the Ethiopian government referred had not yet come into operation; that the Ethiopian request for a committee of inquiry at the scene of the conflict was passed over because of an Ethiopian statement of January 20 to the effect that such an inquiry now appeared to the government to be "of less value"; and that the Committee of Thirteen could only "decide to watch the situation carefully, in accordance with the mandate which it received from the Council on December 19." Only one conclusion of importance could be drawn from this report, and that was the fact that the Committee of Thirteen evidently considered it useless to recommend further attempts at conciliation.

The Committee of Eighteen therefore resumed its efforts in the direction of coercion of Italy. On January 22 this committee decided (76) "to create a Committee of Experts to conduct a technical examination of the conditions governing the trade in and transport of petroleum and its derivatives, by-products and residues, with a view to submitting an early report to the Committee of Eighteen on the effectiveness of the extension of measures of embargo to the above-mentioned commodities," and it requested its chairman

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(75) O. J. February 1936, p. 106.

(76) O. J. Special Supplement No. 148, p. 9.

"to invite certain Governments to appoint experts to serve on a committee for this purpose." The Committee of Experts was duly constituted, with representatives designated by the governments of Britain, France, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Rumania, Sweden, and the U.S.S.R.

Under the chairmanship of M. Gomez, of Mexico, the Committee of Experts met February 3 - 12, and produced a report whose salient features (77) may be summarized as follows:

1. Under conditions prevailing at the time, it would require a period of about three months for an oil embargo to be effective against Italy.
2. Such an embargo would be ineffective if it were applied only by the members of the League, but if the United States of America would limit its exports to Italy to the normal level of such exports prior to 1935, the embargo would be effective.
3. In view of the possible use by Italy of substitutes for petroleum products, the embargo would be strengthened if it were extended to cover industrial alcohol and benzol.
4. To be effective, an embargo on transport would have to extend to the tankers of all nations, not just those owned by League members, and attention would have to be directed toward the prevention of traffic by indirect routes.

This report was presented to the Committee of Eighteen at its next meeting, on March 2, but before the committee could consider the application of Proposal No. 4A, the French delegate, M. Flandin, had a suggestion to make. "The French delegation thought it would be desirable for the Committee of Thirteen to meet again and consider if it would not be possible (78) to make another urgent appeal to the belligerents to put an end to the war."

The French proposal was accepted, thus staving off the oil sanction for another interim. The Committee of Thirteen, on March 3, addressed to the belligerents "an urgent appeal for the immediate opening of negotiations within the framework of the League....with a view to the prompt (79) cessation of hostilities and the definite restoration of peace." The com-

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(77) O. J. Special Supplement No. 148, p. 67.

(78) O. J. Special Supplement No. 149, p. 15.

(79) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 359.

mittee was to meet on March 10 to hear replies from the belligerents.

In the meantime, Germany, on March 7, reoccupied the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland, and the Ethiopian affair was side-tracked in the minds of both French and British statesmen. The Committee of Thirteen reassembled, not on March 10, but on March 23, in London, where the Council was holding an extraordinary session to deal with the German problem.

Both Italy and Ethiopia replied encouragingly to the March 3 appeal of the Committee of Thirteen to bring their hostilities to a close. There appears to have been some doubt, however, of Italian sincerity on this point, because, although Italy's reply of March 8 indicated <sup>(80)</sup> Il Duce's acceptance "in principle" of the committee's appeal, Ethiopia complained <sup>(81)</sup> that the Italians had not declared the terms under which they would negotiate "within the framework of the League." The Ethiopian communication gave notice that Haile Selassie's acceptance of the committee's request had been contingent upon Italy's fulfillment of this stipulation, which, as Ethiopia pointed out, had been laid down by the committee itself. The Ethiopian note went on to remind the League that "for fifteen months past" the African country had "made pressing appeals for the League's intervention," and that, so far, "no effective solution" had been forthcoming. In conclusion, the Ethiopians urged that "the assistance promised under Article 16" be given to their stricken country "without delay and with all necessary effectiveness."

When the Committee of Thirteen met on March 23, however, the question of sanctions was not raised, and Ethiopia's request that Italy

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(80) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 395.

(81) Ibid., p. 396.

be required to give some assurance of acceptance of the committee's stipulations of March 3 was passed over. The Committee of Thirteen confined itself to the passage of this resolution:  
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"The Committee of Thirteen takes note of the replies given by the two parties to the dispute to the appeal addressed to them on March 3. It requests its Chairman, assisted by the Secretary-General, to get in touch with the two parties and to take such steps as may be called for in order that the Committee may be able, as soon as possible, to bring the two parties together and, within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant, to bring about the prompt cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace."

On April 6, Haile Selassie's forces were defeated by Marshal Badoglio in the Battle of Lake Ashangi, and on April 7 the League received from Ethiopia an appeal containing the following sentence:  
(83)

"Does collective security consist only in making platonic protest against the aggressor and in addressing words of compassion to its victim?"

The Committee of Thirteen met, at British insistence, on April 8. On this occasion, Mr. Eden spoke strongly both on the delay of the League in handling the Italo-Ethiopian problem and on the use of poison gas by the Italians. The latter subject was side-tracked by M. Flandin's objection that the Committee of Thirteen was not a body competent to deal with the question of atrocities, and that, moreover, Italian charges against the Ethiopians in the matter of mutilation of prisoners must be given equal consideration with the Ethiopian charges against the Italians with regard to the use of poison gas. Finally an especially appointed committee of jurists ruled that the Council of the League was competent to deal with any treaty violations and that the Council could delegate its power to such organs as it might see fit. The Committee of Thirteen then addressed to both bellig-

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(82) Op. cit., Part II, p. 398.

(83) Ibid., p. 401.

erents a communication asking them "to take all measures necessary to prevent any failure to observe the Conventions or the principles of international law."<sup>(84)</sup>

To this appeal the Ethiopian government, on April 11, gave assurance that it would take all steps necessary to suppress illegal modes of warfare, but the Italian government asserted that "The observance of these laws must be bilateral. The Italian military authorities cannot do otherwise than punish every human atrocity committed by its adversary."<sup>(85)</sup>

Ever since the London meeting of the Committee of Thirteen, Chairman de Madariaga had been attempting to carry out his instructions "to get in touch with the two parties" by having a conversation with the Italian representative. This had proven a difficult task in both London and Geneva; the Italian government had insisted that Senor de Madariaga come to Rome for his discussion. Eventually, although the Italians still preferred to have the conversations in Rome, Baron Aloisi consented to see Senor de Madariaga in Geneva on April 15. As a result of this interview,<sup>(86)</sup> the following Italian demands were reported to the Committee of Thirteen:

"I. With reference to the Italian Government's telegram of March 8th, 1936, the Italian delegation informs the Chairman of the Committee of Thirteen that its Government definitely agrees to the immediate opening of negotiations with a view to the cessation of hostilities. The cessation may be the outcome of the signature either of an armistice or of preliminaries of peace.....

Being anxious to emphasise the Italian Government's desire to respond as effectively as possible to the invitation of the Committee of Thirteen, the Italian delegation accordingly pronounces in favour of..... preliminaries of peace.

"II. The Italian delegation feels bound to point out that such negotiations could not be based on any situation other than the actual situation as it presents itself after six months of military operations. In taking its stand on the ground of conciliation, the Committee of Thirteen

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(84) Op. cit., Part II, p. 363.

(85) Ibid., p. 363.

(86) Ibid., p. 361.

no doubt agrees that there is a de facto situation.

The Italian delegation does not ask the Committee of Thirteen to recognise that situation, but merely not to ignore it.

"III. For these reasons, the Italian delegation considers that the only method suited to that situation is the method of direct negotiations. It is prepared to consider any means of enabling the Committee of Thirteen to be kept informed of the negotiations.

It would suggest that the venue of the negotiations should be fixed at Ouchy.

"IV. The Italian delegation takes this opportunity to express its hope that the outcome of these negotiations will be such as to enable the Italian Government to resume active participation with the League of Nations in consonance with the general situation.

These proposals were rejected by the Ethiopian delegation when communicated to them. This significant comment was included in their rejection:

"In asking that the Ethiopian people be abandoned to its aggressor, the Italian Government is in reality merely fixing its price for a bargain, whereby Italy would give her support in a European dispute in return for the removal of sanctions and for the League's indifference to the Italian aggression."

On April 17, Senor de Madariaga reported to the Committee of Thirteen the failure of the undertaking with which he had been entrusted on March 23. On April 20 this failure was re-iterated in the report of the Committee of Thirteen to the Council.

The meeting of the Council at Geneva on April 20 is interesting, because, coming as it did on the eve of Haile Selassie's flight from his country and of the abrupt denouement of the whole Italo-Ethiopian story, it revealed so clearly the positions which had been taken by the nations of the League.

The first speaker, after the report of the Committee of Thirteen, was Baron Aloisi, who, adopting an aggrieved tone, laid the

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(87) Op. cit., Part II, p. 361.



blame for the failure of the peace negotiations upon Ethiopia's unwillingness to co-operate and "most definitely" rejected "the insinuation....that the Italian Government was trying to drive a bargain for its support in a European dispute." Then, as though substantiating this very insinuation, he concluded with the remark that "Italian co-operation in the work of European pacification, which will have to follow the settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute.....will also be retarded by the failure of conciliation."<sup>(88)</sup>

Mr. Eden, who followed Baron Aloisi as a speaker, voiced a last-minute appeal for the strengthening of sanctions and a plea for the future of the League.<sup>(89)</sup> M. Paul-Boncour, speaking for France, did not echo Mr. Eden's concern with the future. He was occupied with the present and with "considerations of elementary prudence," which apparently meant the conciliation of Italy at any price.<sup>(90)</sup>

M. Potemkine, of the U.S.S.R., expressed himself as being "distressed to see that even within the League itself there is a tendency to treat an aggressor with more tolerance and even indulgence the more arrogant he shows himself to be."<sup>(91)</sup>

There were other speakers. Inclining to the British view of strengthening sanctions were M. Borberg, of Denmark; Mr. Bruce, of Australia; and Senor Ruiz Guinazu, of Argentina. Senhor de Vasconcellos, of Portugal, joined with Mr. Eden in his denunciation of the use of poison gas. But Senor Garcia Oldini, of Chile, and Senor Zaldumbide, of Ecuador, felt, with M. Paul-Boncour, that it was a time for conciliation.

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(88) *Op. cit.*, Part II, p. 377.

(89) *Ibid.*, p. 379.

(90) *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

(91) *Ibid.*, p. 380.

On April 20, the Council passed a resolution taking note of the various reports which had been submitted to it, and continuing as follows: (92)

"(The Council) Regrets that...it has not been possible to bring about the cessation of hostilities and that war is continuing under conditions which have been declared to be contrary to the Covenant, and which involve the execution of the obligations laid upon the Members of the League in such a case by the Covenant;

"Addresses to Italy a supreme appeal that, in view of present circumstances, which call for the co-operation of all the nations, she should bring to the settlement of her dispute with Ethiopia that spirit which the League of Nations is entitled to expect from one of its original Members and a permanent Member of the Council;

"Recalls that Italy and Ethiopia are bound by the Protocols of June 17th, 1925, on the use of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and by the Conventions regarding the conduct of war to which these two States are parties, and emphasizes the importance which has been attached to these instruments by all the contracting States."

Following the adoption of this resolution, the Council adjourned to meet again on May 11.

Meanwhile, the Italian armies in Ethiopia won their victory. On May 2 the Emperor, with his family and his suite, fled from Ethiopia. On May 5 Italian troops occupied Addis Ababa, and the event was hailed by Mussolini not only as the end of the Italo-Ethiopian war, but also as the end of the sovereign state of Ethiopia. (93) On May 9 Il Duce announced a decree annexing Ethiopia to Italy and conferring the title of "Emperor" upon the King of Italy. By another decree, Marshal Badoglio was appointed Governor-General of Ethiopia. These decrees were converted into law by acts of the Italian Chamber and Senate on May 14 and May 16.

The League Council, meeting on May 11, was therefore presented with a fait accompli in the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. On May 12, in the absence of Baron Aloisi (the Italian delegation having been recalled to Rome that morning), but with M. Wolde Maryam still representing Ethiopia at

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(92) Op. cit., Part II, p. 393.

(93) Toynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v. II, p. 358.

(94)

the Council table, the Council adopted the following resolution:

"The Council,

"Having met to consider the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia:

"Recalls the conclusions reached and the decisions taken in this matter in the League of Nations since October 3rd, 1935;

"Is of the opinion that further time is necessary to permit its Members to consider the situation created by the grave new steps taken by the Italian Government;

"Decides to resume its deliberations on this subject on June 15th;

"And considers that, in the meantime, there is no cause for modifying the measures previously adopted in collaboration by the Members of the League."

Actually, it was the Assembly, meeting on June 30, which wound up the Ethiopian affair. Italy sent to the Assembly a letter describing the situation in Ethiopia, with particular emphasis upon the beneficial results of Italy's work in that country and the still more beneficial results to

(95)

come. This letter, signed by Count Ciano, closed with an offer of Italy's European co-operation in exchange for the lifting of sanctions:

"The Italian Government cannot but recall the abnormal situation in which Italy has been placed and the necessity for the immediate removal of such obstacles as have been and are in the way of the international co-operation which Italy sincerely seeks, and to which she is prepared to give a tangible contribution for the sake of the maintenance of peace."

The reading of the Italian letter was followed by a speech from the delegate of Argentina, whose government had requested the summoning of the Assembly. The purpose of this address was to outline the "case of conscience" with which the League was faced.

(96)

As the representative from Argentina completed his remarks, Haile Selassie in person rose to state the Ethiopian case. Said the Negus:

(97)

"There is perhaps no precedent for a head of a state himself speaking in this Assembly. But there is certainly no precedent for a people being the victim of such wrongs and being threatened with abandonment to

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(94) O. J. June 1936, p. 540.

(95) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, pp. 19-21.

(96) Ibid., pp. 21-22.

(97) Ibid., pp. 22-25.

its aggressor. Nor has there ever before been an example of any Government proceeding to the systematic extermination of a nation by barbarous means in violation of the most solemn promises....."

He went on to review the whole controversy, stressing the frightfulness of the Italian onslaught and the delay of the diplomatic procedure by which the members of the League had promised assistance that was not forthcoming. He made the point that he was "defending the cause of all small peoples who are threatened with aggression" and proclaimed that the question at hand involved "the very existence of the League."

In the succeeding days of the Assembly session there were other speakers from other countries. The French delegate re-iterated the usual French thesis of the necessity, first and foremost, for European security. The representatives of Britain and its dominions all deplored the failure of the League to uphold the Covenant. M. Litvinov, of the U.S.S.R., went to the heart of the affair under discussion, beginning his remarks as  
(98)  
follows:

"We have met here to complete a page in the history of the League of Nations, a page in the history of international life which it will be impossible for us to read without a feeling of bitterness. We have to liquidate a course of action which was begun in fulfillment of our obligations as Members of the League,.....but which was not carried to its conclusion....."

On July 2, the Ethiopian delegation submitted to the President two draft resolutions, read to the Assembly as follows:  
(99)

"I. The Assembly recalls the terms of Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant, to which it declares its faithful adherence. Accordingly, it proclaims that it will recognise no annexation obtained by force.

"II. The Assembly, desirous of affording Ethiopia the assistance to which Article 16 entitles it, in order that it may defend its territorial integrity and political independence, decides to recommend to the Governments of the States Members to give their guarantee to the loan

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(98) Op. cit., p. 35.

(99) Ibid., p. 60.

of 10,000,000 pounds which will be issued by Ethiopia under conditions to be fixed by the Council after an opinion has been given by the Financial Committee of the League of Nations."

These resolutions, however, were not immediately voted upon by the League. Instead, the following draft resolution, submitted by the General Committee of the League, was given priority:

(100)

# "I

"The Assembly,

"(1) Having met again on the initiative of the Government of the Argentine Republic, and in pursuance of the decision to adjourn its session taken on October 11th, 1935, in order to examine the situation arising out of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute;

"(2) Taking note of the communications and declarations which have been made to it on this subject;

"(3) Noting that various circumstances have prevented the full application of the Covenant of the League of Nations;

"(4) Remaining firmly attached to the principles of the Covenant, which are also expressed in other diplomatic instruments such as the declaration of the American States, dated August 3rd, 1932, excluding the settlement of territorial questions by force;

"(5) Being desirous of strengthening the authority of the League of Nations by adapting the application of these principles to the lessons of experience;

"(6) Being convinced that it is necessary to strengthen the real effectiveness of the guarantees of security which the League affords to its Members:

"Recommends that the Council:

"(a) Should invite the Governments of the Members of the League to send to the Secretary-General, so far as possible before September 1st, 1936, any proposals they may wish to make in order to improve, in the spirit or within the limits laid down above, the application of the principles of the Covenant;

"(b) Should instruct the Secretary-General to make a first examination and classification of these proposals;

"(c) Should report to the Assembly at its next meeting on the state of the question.

# "II

"The Assembly,

"Taking note of the communications and declarations which have been made to it on the subject of the situation arising out of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute;

"Recalling the previous findings and decisions in connection with this dispute;

"Recommends that the Co-ordination Committee should make all

necessary proposals to the Governments in order to bring to an end the measures taken by them in execution of Article 16 of the Covenant."

When this resolution of the General Committee was put to a vote, Ethiopia voted against it, four states abstained from voting, and  
(101)  
forty-four states voted in favor of it. M. van Zeeland, the President of the Assembly, then turned his attention to the Ethiopian resolutions. The first of these, he pointed out, was covered by the General Committee's resolution. On the second, the Ethiopian request for financial assistance,  
(102)  
the Assembly voted as follows:

In favor	_____	1
Against	_____	23
Abstentions	_____	25

The Ethiopian cause was lost, and the League Assembly closed its session on July 4, 1936, with President van Zeeland's final address including the following words:  
(103)

"I do not consider that all the criticisms - however understandable - which have been by implication brought against us are deserved..... I believe that those amongst us who have acted in this way can, even after what has taken place, claim that their conscience is clear; they have contributed to the work which we are here attempting to promote, everything which it was in their power to give...."

It remained only for the delegates at Geneva to resolve themselves into the Co-ordination Committee and to recommend that sanctions against Italy be lifted. This was done on July 4, with July 15 set as the  
(104)  
date on which the sanctions should cease to apply.

Italy's victory was complete.

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(101) Op. cit., p. 68.

(102) Ibid., p. 69.

(103) Ibid., p. 70.

(104) O. J. Special Supplement No. 149, p. 63.

#### Chapter IV - Italy As The Aggressor.

From the beginning of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy to the end, Il Duce contended that his campaign in East Africa was designed to safeguard Italy's colonial frontiers. For instance, the communication from the Italian government to the Secretary-General of the League on March 22, 1935, stated:

"The new Ethiopian appeal to Geneva is based upon unfounded or incorrect premises..... The dispatch of Italian troops to the East African colonies is dictated by the clear necessity of providing for the safety of those colonies."

(105)

Again, on May 25, 1935, Baron Aloisi told the League Council:

"The Italian Government, like any other government in similar circumstances, cannot allow the measures taken for the legitimate defense of its territory to form the subject of remarks by anyone whatsoever, or that they should be exploited in order to arouse and disturb international public opinion."

And a year later, at the Council session of April 20, 1936, the Italian representative referred to the Italo-Ethiopian war, then in its final stage, as "a dispute that should have been kept within its strictly colonial limits."

(107)

Unless Mussolini included the deliberate conquest of a foreign state among his measures of "legitimate defense", however, it seems impossible to reconcile the facts of the situation with the Italian contentions on the subject. Ethiopia represented a valuable field of conquest for a state which had long desired to play the role of a Great Power. Mussolini seems to have realized this, and to have converted the Walwal incident into a sacred ball. There is all the more reason to believe that this maneuver was carefully calculated, because the Italian leader did not show his hand openly until after Germany's denunciation of its treaty obligations had

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(105) O. J. May 1935, p. 573.

(106) O. J. June 1935, p. 641.

(107) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 377.

demonstrated the ineffectiveness of Geneva's machinery for collective security. (108) Prior to Germany's test case, Il Duce, although apparently deliberately prolonging the negotiations over the Walwal incident, professed a friendly spirit toward Ethiopia and a willingness to settle amicably the differences between Rome and Addis Ababa. After the German example, however, the Italian grievances against the empire of the Negus were speedily permitted to justify military operations.

The Italian government began its campaign with efforts, in the early months of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy, to secure a settlement of the Walwal incident by strictly bilateral negotiations between the two governments involved. This was a legally tenable position under the provisions of the Treaty of 1928, Article 5 of which Ethiopia invoked. This (109) article reads:

"Both Governments undertake to submit to a procedure of conciliation and arbitration disputes which may arise between them and which it may not have been possible to settle by ordinary diplomatic methods, without having recourse to armed force...."

When Ethiopia urged that the Walwal incident be submitted to "a procedure of conciliation and arbitration," Italy argued that "ordinary diplomatic methods" had not been exhausted. For instance, in the communication from the Italian government to the Secretary-General of the League (110) on March 22, 1935, the following passages appear:

"It is untrue that the Ethiopian Government vainly demanded arbitration. The Italian Government has...continued its endeavours to arrive at a settlement of the incident in accordance with the provisions of Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928, both by official correspondence and by direct negotiations...."

"The Italian Government, although not considering, for its part, the phase of direct negotiations to be at an end, and although still

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(108) In March 1935, Germany announced its re-armament in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. The League's only action at this time was a resolution of remonstrance.

(109) O. J. June 1935, p. 639.

(110) O. J. May 1935, p. 573.



awaiting a reply from Ethiopia, declares, nevertheless, that it has not, and has never had, any intention of evading the procedure laid down in Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928. In conformity with the provisions of this article, the Italian Government is, on its side, prepared, if the phase of direct negotiations closes without an agreement being reached, and if the Ethiopian Government does the same, to take steps forthwith with a view to the constitution of the commission provided for. In such circumstances, the Italian Government points out that, the dispute in question being one which the two Governments agreed by the exchange of notes of January 19th last to submit to the procedure laid down in Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928, Article 15 of the Covenant cannot be applicable in this particular case."

(111)

Again, on May 25, 1935, Baron Aloisi told the Council that:

"The text of the 1928 Treaty and the letters which form an integral part of it provide in the clearest possible terms for three successive phases of procedure: direct negotiations, conciliation, arbitration.

"The first phase began immediately in January and continued until the time when the Ethiopian Government asked that the direct negotiations, which, nevertheless, had never been interrupted, should be regarded as exhausted. The Italian Government, anxious to show condescension and goodwill, acceded to the Ethiopian request...."

This bit of strategy on Italy's part, which, technically, could not be assailed, served to tie the hands of the League from January until June.

In the second phase of the conflict, when Ethiopia's repeated demands that the case be laid before an arbitration commission finally forced Italy to agree to the formation of such a commission, Il Duce's representatives were promptly ready with a second stalemate. This time they sought to limit the competence of any arbitration commission to a decision on the actual fighting at Walwal, exclusive of the question of the disputed ownership of the territory. Baron Aloisi laid the foundation for this maneuver on May 25, 1935, when, in accepting Ethiopia's request for an arbitration commission, he told the League Council:

(112)

"It must be recalled that the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1908 concerning the frontiers between Somaliland and Ethiopia lays down in Article 5 that the two Governments undertake to fix the frontier line on the spot in accordance with the particulars mentioned in the Treaty.

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(111) O. J. June 1935, p. 641.

(112) Ibid.

"In application of this article, an Italo-Ethiopian Commission went to work in 1910, but after demarcating the frontier in the Dolo zone, it was obliged to suspend work.....

"It is to this Boundary Commission that falls, if need be, the task of interpreting the provisions of the 1908 Treaty and settling any cognate questions.

"The Italian Government, which has quite recently confirmed to the Ethiopian Government its readiness to continue the demarcation of the frontier as soon as the present dispute has been settled, cannot agree to any procedure other than that stipulated in the 1908 Treaty.....

"Similarly, the Italian Government cannot, for obvious reasons of prestige, agree to the resumption forthwith of the work of demarcation....."

On July 5, 1935, Count Aldrovani and M. Montagna followed Baron Aloisi's lead by registering a prompt objection to the examination by the arbitration commission of the question of the ownership of Walwal, which they characterized as "a frontier question," excluded from examination by the commission. M. de La Pradelle and Mr. Potter argued that:

"The correctness of the conduct of the officer commanding the Italian line, as recognized by him, and argued by the diplomatic representative of Italy, was, it is clear, intimately bound up from the first day with the determination of the Italian or Ethiopian nationality of Walwal..."

But the League ruling on the competence of the commission sustained the Italian objection. Italy thus succeeded in rendering the report of the commission practically worthless.

By the time the arbitration commission was ready to submit the unilluminating conclusion that neither Italy nor Ethiopia was to blame for the Walwal incident, Italy was ready to furnish new excuses for the attack on Ethiopia. Baron Aloisi accordingly presented the League, on the opening day of its session in September 1935, with a long and carefully prepared memorandum on the domestic situation in Ethiopia. This document was divided into two parts, with subheads as follows:

#### Part I. Italy And Ethiopia.

##### I. Violations of Italo-Ethiopian Treaties by Ethiopia.

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(113) O. J. August 1935, p. 973.

(114) Ibid., p. 974.

(115) Ibid., p. 968.

(116) O. J. November 1935, pp. 1355-1416.

- II. Acts Against the Security of the Italian Colonies and Against the Italians in Ethiopia.
- III. Chronic Disorder in Ethiopia - Italy's Position in Ethiopia under Existing Treaties.

Part II - Ethiopia And The League Of Nations.

- I. How Ethiopia Became a Member of the League of Nations.
- II. Political Structure and Conditions of Ethiopia in Relation to Article I of the Covenant. (117)
- III. Ethiopia and Article 23 of the Covenant. (118)
- IV. Violations of the Special Engagements Undertaken by Ethiopia towards the League of Nations.
- V. Barbarism in Ethiopia.

"Covenant of the League of Nations.

(117)

"Article I.

"The original Members of the League of Nations shall be those of the Signatories which are named in the Annex to this Covenant, and also such of those other States named in the Annex as shall accede without reservation to this Covenant. Such accessions shall be effected by a declaration deposited with the Secretariat within two months of the coming into force of the Covenant. Notice thereof shall be sent to all other Members of the League.

"Any fully self-governing State, Dominion or Colony not named in the Annex may become a Member of the League if its admission is agreed to by two-thirds of the Assembly, provided that it shall give effective guarantees of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations, and shall accept such regulations as may be prescribed by the League in regard to its military, naval and air forces and armaments.

"Any Member of the League may, after two years' notice of its intention to do so, withdraw from the League, provided that all its international obligations under this Covenant shall have been fulfilled at the time of its withdrawal."

(118)

"Article 23.

"Subject to and in accordance with the provisions of international conventions existing or hereafter to be agreed upon, the Members of the League:

"(a) will endeavor to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labor for men, women, and children, both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extend, and for that purpose will establish and maintain the necessary international organizations;

"(b) undertake to secure just treatment of the native inhabitants of territories under their control;

"(c) will entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children and the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs;

"(d) will entrust the League with the general supervision of the trade in arms and ammunition with the countries in which the control of this traffic is necessary in the common interest.

"(e) will make provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and of transit and the equitable treatment of commerce of all Members of the League. In this connection, the special necessities of the regions devastated during the war of 1914-1918 shall be borne in mind.

"(f) will endeavor to take steps in matters of international concern for the prevention and control of disease."

In this elaborate memorandum, Italy reduced to unimportance the original Walwal clash and paraded, instead, conditions of slavery and disorder in Haile Selassie's realm, which, the League was informed, constituted a menace to neighboring Italian colonies. As proof of Italian contentions in this regard, street stories and photographs, arranged in true propaganda fashion, were offered to Geneva. By a series of "conclusions" the following finale, in which the League was invited by implication to expel Ethiopia from the organization, was reached:

"Such are the barbarous customs and archaic laws in force today in Ethiopia. Surely the League of Nations must consider that a State such as Ethiopia, in which barbarism is still systematic, is unworthy to stand side by side with civilized nations.

"By her conduct, Ethiopia has placed herself outside the Covenant of the League and has rendered herself unworthy of the trust placed in her when she was admitted to membership....."

Baron Aloisi informed the Council that Italy had already ceased to regard the Empire of the Negus as a state in full and free association with other states, and that Il Duce was prepared to take whatever measures of safety the Ethiopian menace might demand.

This explosive denunciation burst unheralded in the chambers which had so recently heard Italy's patient and oft-reiterated willingness to solve its Ethiopian difficulties by means of arbitration and treaty provisions. The dramatic effect of Italy's broadside was somewhat dampened, however, by the simultaneous announcement by the British delegate of the failure of the Three Power Conference to achieve a satisfactory settlement of the dispute. From this report it appeared that Italy's concern over the deplorable conditions in Ethiopia did not extend to the point of co-operation in an international effort to rehabilitate the dominions of Haile Selassie. The civilising mission in Ethiopia was seemingly to be a

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(119) O. J. November 1935, p. 1416.

(120) Ibid., p. 1219.

a solo performance by Il Duce, who consistently refused to participate in any jointly administered system of Ethiopian reform, even though such a system might contemplate particular economic advantages for Italy.

After nine months of skillful parleying, Mussolini was uncovering his designs. Italy was bent on war. Like all wars, it was to be, according to Italian representation, a defense measure. It was further designed to lift from their backwardness a barbaric people, against whom, it was apparent, Il Duce had been making warlike preparations for all the months in which he had kept the hands of the League tied.

Was it Italy's bland assumption that such a venture would be allowed to proceed unchallenged to its inevitable conclusion? It may have been. Certainly the Sino-Japanese affair offered an excellent precedent for concluding that League action would be a fiasco; and the existing European situation, with Great Britain and France still uneasy over the German Phoenix, argued strongly for non-intervention by the Western Powers in Italy's colonial projects. If Mussolini's thoughts, however, were that the legality of his action would pass unquestioned, he was doomed to disappointment. The League not only indicted Italy for aggression, but also moved with amazing promptness to draft sanctions against the aggressor.

This put Il Duce in a difficult position, but he accepted the challenge. Proclaiming to the world that the League was using two weights and two measures for judging nations, Italy staunchly affirmed that sanctions would not alter her course. Said Mussolini in a public address:

"For months past, the wheel of Destiny has been moving towards its goal under the impulsion of our calm determination; at the present hour its rhythm is more swift and irresistible than ever... To economic sanctions

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(121) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 368; Baron Aloisi's speech to Council:  
 ".....for Italy there were two weights and two measures."

(122) Mussolini's speech of October 2, 1935; quoted by Toynbee, Arnold J.,  
 op. cit., v. II, p. 200.

we shall oppose our discipline, our sobriety, our spirit of sacrifice. To military sanctions we shall reply with military measures."

Meanwhile, Mussolini was preparing what appears to have been another adroit ruse for slowing the wheels of international machinery. This time he intimated to France that he would consider making peace. Secret negotiations thereupon set in at Paris, while the Co-ordination Committee of the League delayed in fixing a date for sanctions to go into effect. It was finally discovered that Il Duce's price was too high. Neither Geneva nor Addis Ababa would have consented to his suggestions; so the matter was dropped. But Italy had been granted a brief respite from the imposition of sanctions, and the Italian armies had made good use of six weeks of grace. (123) (124)

On November 18, 1935, almost a year after the original Italo-Ethiopian encounter at Walwal, the League sanctions went into effect. Mussolini was loud in his protest, not to the League as a collective body, it is interesting to discover, but in a note to the individual member states which had voted for sanctions. Did he hope by this move to require individual replies, perhaps indicative of a lack of solidarity among the League states? At any rate, in this communication, sent to the various capitals, Mussolini denied the "legal and moral basis" of the League decision and contended that the Co-ordination Committee was "not by any means an organ of the League of Nations," so that the individual countries which applied sanctions were acting on their own authority and were responsible to Italy "both as regards the scope of the measures which they adopt and as regards their legal justification." The letter went on to recount the numerous advantages already being enjoyed by Ethiopians who had surrendered themselves to the civilizing regime of Italy and to explain that Italy could

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(123) See p. 24.

(124) See p. 26.

(125) Dean, Vera Micholes, op. cit., p. 321.

(126) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, p. 336.

not now withdraw from Ethiopia "...because of the peoples who have placed their faith in us and who would be dedicated to terrible reprisals and revenge should Italian protection come to an end." Furthermore, continued Il Duce in sterner tone, the resort to sanctions, "far from facilitating the termination of the conflict,....adds to its gravity and threatens to prolong its duration." In addition, Italy would be obliged to seek ways of defending itself through "economic and financial measures" which might involve "substantial deviations from present currents of exchange and trade."

If this note were intended to split the League members into opposing factions, it did not succeed. Neither did it further delay the application of sanctions, which went into effect, as scheduled, on November 18. (127)  
In Italy, as recounted by Vera Micheles Dean, the Fascist Council voted:

"to consider November 18...as 'a date of ignominy and iniquity in the history of the world';....invited all Italians to hang out flags as if it were a holiday; ordered a stone record of the 'siege' to be sculptured on the buildings of all Italian communes.....; and expressed its sympathy to those states which, by refusing to apply sanctions, had 'aided the cause of peace.'"

As Mussolini foretold, Italy immediately applied counter sanctions as a retaliation. Special licenses were required for the importation of 197 specified commodities, including many articles not yet on the League's embargo list, from countries applying sanctions against Italy. Il Duce also took steps to conserve the nation's resources. Stringent measures were announced to regulate the use and purchase of important articles of national defense. Gold was sought in every corner of the realm, and the world was treated to a series of propaganda pictures showing Italian women donating their wedding rings to be made into bullion for governmental use.

The problem which most worried Il Duce apparently was not the

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(127) Dean, Vera Micheles, op. cit., p. 321.

"siege" which Italy was being forced to withstand, but the possibility that the League might extend its embargo to include petroleum. This suggestion was accepted by the Committee of Eighteen on November 6 with the provision that "if the replies received by the Committee to the present proposal...warrant it, the Committee of Eighteen will propose to the Governments a date for bringing into force the measures mentioned." Since the Italian army was dependent upon motorized transportation and airplanes at-  
 (128)  
 tack, Mussolini well knew that a petroleum sanction might actually end the African conflict. He therefore brought pressure to bear at likely points in  
 (129)  
 an effort to forestall the development. He also made it known that any at-  
 (130)  
 tempt to interfere with Italy's oil supply would be considered an act of war.

This threat may have been an act of desperation. Mussolini, heavily committed to the Ethiopian venture by investments of every variety, including human life and the Italian national purse, could not withdraw from Africa so late in the game. He must have been fairly certain, moreover, that, if he blustered enough, he would get away with it. France, faced always by the German problem, which became more acute in March 1936 when Nazi troops marched into the demilitarized Rhineland, could not afford the spectacle of an over-powered Italy. In addition, it took no diplomatic seer to divine that what Europe wanted least of all was a European war. Once more Mussolini would outwit his foes.

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(128) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, p. 10.

(129) Tynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v. II, p. 277:

"As early as the 24th (November) it was being rumored in Paris that M. Laval had been informed by the Italian Ambassador, Signor Cerruti, that an extension of the embargo....to include oil might be expected to have an untoward effect upon Italo-French relations."

(130) See p. 26. Also Tynbee, op. cit., v. II, p. 335, quoting from an article in Popolo d'Italia, Feb. 1, 1936, said to be by Mussolini: "At a certain moment, the embargo will end in a blockade; and the blockade will mean war - no longer a limited operation of colonial security, but a war of extermination in Europe....."



What happened was that an ~~aggrieved~~ France and a sorely less uneasy Britain evolved the Hoare-Laval Plan, by which Li Lung was offered, in Ethiopian territory, the peace price he had intimated earlier that he would accept. Before Mussolini could either decline or accept this proposal, it was repudiated by public opinion in both Britain and France, but this was of small consequence to the Italian leader. Satisfied that his nervous neighbors were not going to push the oil embargo, he was safe in driving toward a peace that could ignore all negotiations, since it would be a peace based upon the complete surrender of the hapless Ethiopia.

In the spring of 1936, as the Italian armies were moving toward their inevitable victory, the League again heard Italian charges that the Ethiopians were an uncivilized people menacing the Europeans. This time the Italian allegations dealt with the illegal methods of warfare of their African adversaries. Documents and photographs were circulated at Geneva in support of Italian contentions that the Ethiopians used dum-dum bullets, tortured and maltreated prisoners, and misused the Red Cross emblem. The documents and photographs illustrated only isolated cases, however, and many of these were denied by the Ethiopian government, which accused the Italians of deliberately bombing Red Cross hospitals and ambulances, of bombing towns listed with the League as demilitarized, and of using poison gas. Addis Ababa did admit that one Italian airman who made a forced landing in an outlying district, "was seized and decapitated by the local nomads who were exasperated by the bombing and machine-gunning  
(132)  
of their flocks," and that "dum-dum cartridges may have been in the possession of hunters who were incorporated in the army....but the Ethiopian

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(131) See pp. 29-31.

(132) O. J. April 1936, p. 369.

Government never imported or supplied such cartridges to the army." (133)

On May 5, following Haile Selassie's flight from Ethiopia, Italian troops entered Addis Ababa, ending the Italo-Ethiopian war. On May 11, at the meeting of the League Council, Baron Aloisi announced: (134)

"I beg to state that the Italian delegation cannot agree to the so-called Ethiopian representative being present at the Council table. Nothing resembling an organized Ethiopian State exists. The only sovereignty in Ethiopia is Italian... Any discussion on a dispute between Ethiopia and Italy would accordingly be pointless. I am bound, therefore, not to take part in it."

The Italian representative then withdrew from the Council table.

To the meeting of the League Assembly, in June, Italy sent a letter recounting the Italo-Ethiopian story in such a way as to blame Ethiopia for the prolonged controversy and to picture Italy as being forced to annex the territory of Haile Selassie. Part of this letter reads: (135)

"The Italian Government wishes to recall that its attitude towards the League of Nations, despite the measures imposed for the first time by the Member States upon Italy, was characterized by its willingness to take all initiatives into favorable consideration.....

"The attempts made to this end are well known. The Hoare-Laval proposals forwarded to Geneva, Rome and Addis Ababa on December 11th, 1935, which the Italian Government was about to examine with the greatest attention, proved fruitless, having been rejected by the Negus on December 12th.

"On March 3rd, 1936, the Committee of Thirteen addressed an appeal to the parties at issue to attempt conciliation. On March 8th, the Italian Government replied by declaring its willingness to negotiate. After the appeal of the Committee of Thirteen and throughout the month of March, the Italian troops took no initiative in military operations. It was the Negus himself who, at the beginning of April, engaged his troops in the battle which proved decisive.....

"In the course of conversations held at Geneva on April 15th and 16th with the Chairman of the Committee of Thirteen, attended by the Secretary-General of the League, the representative of the Italian Government defined the manner in which negotiations should be conducted.....

"On April 16th, the Ethiopian Government again replied with a refusal. In these circumstances, the Council decided, on April 20, 1936, that the attempt at conciliation had failed.....

"Two weeks after the refusal to negotiate on the part of the Ethiopian delegate in Geneva, the Negus fled from Addis Ababa, followed by members of his government, and took refuge abroad, being fully aware that,

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(133) Op. cit., p. 565.

(134) O. J. June 1936, p. 535.

(135) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, p. 20.

not only did he lack support, but that he was menaced by the rising population as well as by the warriors he had mobilized. During the retreat from Dessie, this uprising cost the lives of several members of the Imperial escort.

"Before the Italian troops reached Addis Ababa, the rudimentary organization of the Ethiopian State had collapsed. The capital of Ethiopia had been deliberately left open to looters and incendiaries, so that Italian intervention was urged to protect the Foreign Legations. Italy found the country in a state of the most fearful disorder. On few occasions in history has the collapse of a regime and a dynasty received such a clear and definite sanction by its own hand and by the will of the population as in the present case.

"Italy was therefore compelled to accept such responsibilities as were entailed by the situation and to...comply with the wishes and requirements of the populations obviously needful of a new order capable of assuring progress and peace....."

This remarkable letter went on to describe Italy's "sacred mission of civilization" and the measures already taken in Ethiopia to carry out the mission. It was documented with a list of the chieftains who had already pledged their allegiance to Italy, with the royal decree defining the organization and administration of "Italian East Africa", and with Marshal Badoglio's proclamation, as Governor of the newly acquired territory, outlawing slavery. (136) The letter closed, as has been previously noted, closed with an invitation to (137) raise the sanctions immediately, so that Italy might demonstrate its willingness to co-operate with the League states "for the sake and maintenance" of peace. Mussolini's country, having accomplished its own belligerent designs, was now ready to give "a tangible contribution" to the realization of this noble ideal.

The sanctions were lifted on July 13, 1936, and, at least as far as the de facto situation went, Italy emerged entirely free with the Ethiopian prize. As for the de jure situation, we may assume that Mussolini was not greatly concerned!

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(136) Op. cit., pp. 99-104.

(137) See p. 39.

## Chapter V - Ethiopia As The Victim.

It was Ethiopia which confided the Italo-Ethiopian controversy to Geneva. In a telegram to the Secretary-General on December 14, 1935,  
(138)  
the Walwal incident was reported as follows by Addis Ababa:

"Imperial Government has the honor to inform you, for communication to the Council and States Members, that, on November 23rd last, Anglo-Abyssinian Commission investigating pasture-lands in the Abyssinian province of Ogaden was prevented by Italian military force from continuing its work upon its arrival at Walwal, situated about 100 kilometers within the frontier. On December 5th Italian troops with tanks and military aeroplanes suddenly and without provocation attacked Abyssinian escort of the Commission. Abyssinian Government protested by note of December 6th. Despite protest, Italian military aeroplanes three days later bombarded Ade and Gerlogubi in the same province. In response to protest of December 6th and request for arbitration of December 9th under Article 5 of Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of August 2nd, 1928, Italian Charge d'Affaires, disregarding protest, demanded indemnity and moral reparation in note of December 11th and declared in note of December 14th that his government does not see how the solution of an incident of this character can be submitted to arbitral decision. In presence of Italian aggression Abyssinian Government draws Council's attention to gravity of situation. Detailed confirmation and documents follow."

The "detailed confirmation and documents" followed, as promised, in the form of a long memorandum presented to the Secretary-General of the League on January 15. Calling attention to the fact that Ethiopia was exercising its "friendly right", under Article 11 of the Covenant, "to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international  
(139)  
peace or the good understanding between nations," this memorandum stated the Ethiopian version of the facts, reviewed the diplomatic negotiations which had followed, quoted from treaties between Italy and Ethiopia to establish the Ethiopian nationality of Walwal, and concluded with the Ethiopian contention that the dispute was essentially capable of arbitration as contemplated by Article 5 of the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of August 2, 1928, and  
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(138) O. J. February 1935, p. 274.

(139) See p. 11.

(140) See p. 44.

(141)

Article 13 of the League Covenant. Appended to the Ethiopian memorandum was the correspondence which took place at Walwal between Lieutenant-Colonel E. H. M. Clifford, British Commissioner, and Captain Roberto Cimmaruta, the officer commanding the Italian line. The tone of this correspondence is interesting. The British officer was apparently as indignant as the Ethiopians over the Italian action, which both British and Ethiopians considered an unwarranted invasion of Ethiopian territory. The language of the Italian officer was also considered objectionable by the British officer.

(141)

"Covenant of the League of Nations.

"Article 13

"Members of the League agree that, whenever any dispute shall arise between them which they recognize to be suitable for submission to arbitration and which cannot be satisfactorily settled by diplomacy, they will submit the whole matter to arbitration.

"Disputes as to the interpretation of a treaty, as to any question of international law, as to the existence of any fact which if established would constitute a breach of any international obligation, or as to the extent and nature of the reparation to made for any such breach, are declared to be among those which are generally suitable for submission to arbitration.

"For the consideration of any such dispute the court of arbitration to which the case is referred shall be the court agreed on by the parties to the dispute or stipulated in any convention existing between them.

"The Members of the League agree that they will carry out in full good faith any award that may be rendered and that they will not resort to war against a Member of the League which complies therewith. In the event of any failure to carry out such an award, the Council shall propose what steps should be taken to give effect thereto."

(142) O. J. February 1935, pp. 258-262.

(143) Ibid., p. 261; Lieut.-Col. Clifford to Capt. Cimmaruta:

"The Italo-Abyssinian Convention, signed on May 16th, 1908, stipulates that the whole of the Ogaden territory shall remain an Abyssinian dependency. As the Commission's terms of reference in that region merely concern the Ogaden territory.....there has never been any question of the Commission's entering Italian territory....."

(144) Ibid., p. 262; Lieut.-Col. Clifford to Capt. Cimmaruta:

"We should like to believe that you do not know the meaning of the word 'Shefta' - an expression which is not used in this way in an international communication." (Capt. Cimmaruta had referred in writing to the commander of the Abyssinian escort of the commission as a "Chief Shefta" - "bandit chief".)

Unfortunately, the justification of British and Ethiopian indignation on this occasion was never permitted to be established, since the decision of the arbitration commission was limited to the actual military clash at Walwal, which took place after the British officer had withdrawn his commission to Addis. The representatives of Ethiopia on the arbitration commission, although over-ruled by the League's ruling on the competence of the arbitrators, did, however, make out a strong case for the admission of the question of the ownership of Walwal to the discussions of the responsibility involved in the military clash. Their argument ran as follows:

"Whereas, in judging of the responsibility for an engagement between foreign and national troops, it is not a matter of indifference to establish which were national and which were foreign on the actual scene of the engagement; whereas....., moreover, the circumstances include, not only factual circumstances, but also legal circumstances.....; whereas, furthermore, this point of view cannot be regarded as foreign to the factual circumstances of the incident, which include the circumstances that on December 4th, 1934, the day before the incident, the officer commanding the Italian line, Captain Cimmaruta, wrote: 'I shall be obliged to regard any act of violence.....as directed against the territory of His Majesty the King of Italy.' and, secondly, that, on December 11th, 1934, M. Mombelli, Italian Charge d'Affaires at Addis Ababa, wrote to H. E. Blaten Gheta Heruy, Minister for Foreign Affairs: '(1) There can be no doubt that Walwal and Warder belong to Italian Somaliland, as the Italian Government will show in due course; (2) Consequently, Captain Cimmaruta's conduct was quite correct,' so that the correctness of the conduct of the officer commanding the Italian line, as recognized by him and argued by the diplomatic representative of Italy, was, it is clear, intimately bound up from the first day with the determination of the Italian or Ethiopian nationality of Walwal, not to say conditioned by that determination;.....

"For these reasons,.....

"(The undersigned Arbitrators) decide,

"That it would be an abdication of the Commission's independence and a restriction upon the liberty of the defence to forbid the agent of the Ethiopian Government to state the reasons which lead him to consider that the Commission, being free to judge of all the circumstances of the incident, may include among those circumstances the 'ownership' of Walwal."

(Signed) A. de La Pradelle.

(Signed) Pitman B. Potter.

Signed as it was by two outstanding students of international law, this report could scarcely have failed to impress the statesmen at Geneva with its logical reasoning and its possible legal correctness. The trouble was that Ethiopia was unable to back up its legal case with force of arms, and in the disturbed condition of Europe in 1935 it was fruitless to hope that a champion of Ethiopia would appear among the Great Powers.

The Ethiopians seem to have known, almost from the beginning, that they were faced with the prospect of a war for which they were ill prepared. They chose to meet this threat with a demonstration of peaceful intentions and with a reliance upon Geneva to clear up the problem. Thus the remarks of M. Jeze, the Ethiopian representative, to the Council on July 31, 1935, at the time of the Council's consideration of the competence of the arbitration commission to decide the ownership of Walwal:

"The Ethiopian Government wished to inform the Council of the circumstances in which the arbitral procedure, for which it had pressed from the outset.....had come to a standstill. The time has come, if the Council so desires, for the Ethiopian Government to supply a full explanation on this subject, but possibly for the moment it might be more desirable to note, in the first place, that the Ethiopian Government has appealed to the League in order that this problem, which has been before it since January 1935, may be settled finally, the problem at issue being to prevent a war, and, further, that the Ethiopian Government is determined to do all it can to reach a peaceful solution."

By September 1935, the plight of Ethiopia was more desperate. At the Council meeting of September 4, which witnessed three new developments in the situation - the report of the arbitration commission, the report of the failure of the Three Power Conference in Paris, and the presentation of Italy's long memorandum on the Ethiopian situation - this desperation was evident to the Council members in the words of M. Jeze.

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(146) Although acting in the name of the Ethiopian Government, M. de La Pradelle, a Frenchman, was Professor of International Law at the University of Paris, and M. Potter, an American, was Professor of International Organization at the Institute of International Studies, Geneva.

(147) O. J. August 1935, p. 965.

(148)

Passages from his address include the following:

"The Ethiopian delegation has heard with great surprise the indictment of Ethiopia by the Italian representative. The Ethiopian Government desires at once to protest most strongly against the charges brought against it. It reserves its right to prove at a suitable time and in a suitable manner that they are groundless. For the moment it can only feel amazement at this violent indictment, which it has not had time to study.....

"What is the position today?

"The Walwal incident has been settled by arbitration. It possesses the authority of res judicata. That means that there is no longer a Walwal incident; that no responsibility is incurred by Ethiopia by reason of that incident.

"If, however, the Walwal incident, which was the only reason adduced so far to justify military preparations, has ceased to exist, what remains?

"It is in these circumstances that Italy has just sought a new reason and has delivered her indictment. She has shifted the ground of her accusation. The Walwal incident being now worthless, this pretext having been upset and demolished by the unanimous opinion of the arbitrators, a new pretext is sought against Ethiopia.

"The Council will realize that, for the moment, having only just heard this long statement, the Ethiopian Government is not in a position to reply. But it draws the attention of the Council to one capital point. Time presses. This is no longer the moment for dilatory measures. The question is whether in a few days a war of extermination will be opened, and it is that point which the Council should immediately examine."

At the Council meeting of December 18, 1935, the Hoare-Laval

Plan was the chief topic of consideration. On this occasion it was M.

Wolde Maryam who represented Ethiopia. His observations coming clearly to

(149)

the point, he inquired of Geneva:

"Is the victim of the aggression, who has always scrupulously conformed to all the procedures of the Treaties and of the Covenant - as the Assembly has unanimously acknowledged - to be invited by the League to submit to the aggressor and, in the interests of world peace, to abandon the defence of its independence and integrity against its powerful enemy, on the ground that the latter's resolve to exterminate its victim is unshakable? Is the victim to be placed under the implicit threat of abandonment by the League and to be deprived of all hope of succor? Should not this problem, which is vital to the future of international relations between all peoples, whatever their strength, their color, or their race, be laid first of all before the League, and examined publicly there, in complete independence, under the eyes of the whole world?"

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(148) O. J. November 1935, pp. 1137-1138.

(149) O. J. January 1936, p. 12.



The point made by M. Wolde Maryam on December 18 was re-  
(150)  
iterated by him on April 20, 1936, when he said to the Council:

"Will the Council be content to address to the Italian Government, which has challenged the League of Nations and the whole world in the name of might against right, another supreme but academic appeal for its co-operation in the maintenance of peace? Is that the effective assistance which the States Members have bound themselves to afford by signing Article 16 of the Covenant? Is that keeping the promise that the League made to the victim of the aggression in October 1935? Will the League bow to the accomplished fact because it has been accomplished by a powerful State, and because the victim is isolated?"

The Council, apparently, was "content to address to the Italian Government.....another supreme but academic appeal." It stood by, as has been recounted in a previous chapter, while Italy conquered Ethiopia. The attitude of Ethiopia, throughout the spring of 1936, remained what it had always been, one of ineffective protest and appeal to the League. That Ethiopia was not ignorant of the reasons for the League's do-nothing policy was evident when, on April 20, the report of the Committee of Thirteen to  
(151)  
the Council included this paragraph:

"(The Ethiopian delegation) asserted that 'in asking that the Ethiopian Government be abandoned to its aggressor, the Italian Government is in reality merely fixing its price for a bargain, whereby Italy would give her support in a European dispute in return for the removal of sanctions and for the League's indifference to the Italian aggression.'"

Haile Selassie himself, addressing the League Assembly on  
(152)  
June 30, 1936, was even more pointed on this subject. He said:

"It was a profound disappointment to me to note the attitude of a certain Government which, whilst tirelessly protesting its scrupulous attachment to the Covenant, has equally tirelessly striven to prevent its observance. As soon as any measure which was likely to be rapidly effective was proposed, pretexts in one form or another were devised to postpone even consideration of that measure. Did the secret agreements of January 1935 provide for this tireless obstruction?"

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(150) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 393.

(151) Ibid., Part II, p. 361.

(152) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, p. 24.

This speech of Haile Selassie to the Assembly is perhaps the best recapitulation of the Ethiopian point of view which offers itself. Made at the end of the whole affair, after Ethiopia had become "Italian East Africa", this address soberly reviewed for the League development after development in the Italian conquest. The following observations, including the Ethiopian charges that the Italians won their victory through the use of poison gas, were among those made by the Negus:

"It is not only upon warriors that the Italian Government has made war. It has, above all, attacked populations far removed from hostilities, in order to terrorise and exterminate them...

"Sprayers were installed on board aircraft so that they could vaporise, over vast areas of territory, a fine, death-dealing rain. Groups of nine, fifteen, eighteen aircraft followed one another so that the fog issuing from them formed a continuous sheet. It was thus that, from the end of January 1936, soldiers, women, children, cattle, rivers, lakes, and fields were constantly drenched with this deadly rain. In order to kill off systematically all living creatures, in order the more surely to poison waters and pastures, the Italian command made its aircraft pass over and over again. This was its chief method of warfare.....

"These fearful tactics succeeded.... In tens of thousands the victims of Italian mustard gas fell. It was to denounce to the civilised world the tortures inflicted upon the Ethiopian people that I resolved to come to Geneva.....

"The Walwal incident in December 1934 came as a thunderbolt to me. The Italian provocation was obvious. I did not hesitate to appeal to the League of Nations.....

"Unhappily for Ethiopia, this was the time when a certain Government considered that the European situation made it imperative at any price to obtain the friendship of Italy. The price paid was the abandonment of Ethiopian independence to the greed of the Italian Government.....

"In October 1935, the fifty-two nations who are listening to me today gave me an assurance that the aggressor would not triumph, that the resources of the Covenant would be implemented in order to ensure the rule of law and the failure of violence.....

"What has become of the promises made to me?.....

"Placed by the aggressor face to face with the accomplished fact, are the States going to set up the terrible precedent of bowing before force?.....

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(155) Op. cit., pp. 22-23. See League Document C.201.H.125.1936.VII for documents, including the records of the Suez Canal Company, offered by Ethiopians in substantiation of their charges regarding the Italian use of poison gas.

"I ask the great Powers, who have promised the guarantee of collective security to small States - those small States over whom hangs the threat that they may one day suffer the fate of Ethiopia; What measures do they intend to take?"

"Representatives of the world, I have come to Geneva to discharge in your midst the most painful of the duties of the head of a State. What answer am I to take back to my people?"

So it was that Ethiopia pleaded a vain cause at Geneva, where the delegates of civilized nations may have squirmed in their seats, but where there was no help for the nation which paid the penalty of the weak and the unprepared.

## Chapter VI - Great Britain's Stand.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy is that curious combination of circumstances by which Great Britain, rather than France, emerged as the champion of collective security and the advocate of effective international action against an aggressor nation. The reasons for this stand may have lain in considerations of empire or may have arisen from a sincere desire to cement the bonds of international co-operation, but, at any rate, it was the British delegate, Mr. Anthony Eden, who took the lead in attempts to untangle the Ethiopian situation through collective action at Geneva.

Backed by France, British delegates to the League secured a promise from Ethiopian and Italian representatives in January 1935 that a direct settlement of their differences would be undertaken in accordance (154) with the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Amity in 1928. When it appeared in April that no such settlement of the differences had taken place, it was through Anglo-French pressure that Italy yielded to Ethiopia's repeated (155) demands for the constitution of an arbitration commission. And in May, when the Council fixed a time-limit of three months for the settlement of the dispute by arbitration, it was the British delegate who made the most pointed remarks concerning the League's interest in the affair. M. Laval, the French delegate, had just informed the Council, "I most earnestly hope (156) (157) we shall never have to reopen the discussion," but Mr. Eden said:

"The question with which we are dealing is one which has caused serious preoccupation to His Majesty's Government... In matters such as this, responsibilities are involved which are those not only of the two parties, but of the Council itself....."

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(154) See p. 12.

(155) See pp. 12-13.

(156) O. J. June 1935, p. 642.

(157) Ibid.

"It will be observed that, under the terms of the resolution, the Council will remain in close contact with the situation and will meet again to deal with the matter should circumstances render that course necessary."

Throughout these discussions, however, the desire to avoid offending Italy was noticeable in the speeches of the British delegate, as well as in those of other representatives. Although Mr. Eden spoke frequently on the subject of the African controversy, neither he nor any other member of the Council took note of Haile Selassie's requests for neutral observers to be sent to the Ethiopian frontiers, or for steps to be taken to halt Italian preparations for war. Britain, like France and the others, seemed bent on solving only the Walwal incident.

In the summer of 1935, Britain did join with France and Italy at the Three Power Conference in Paris, in the hope, apparently, that a settlement of the affair could be worked out that would prevent further incidents of the Walwal type and would be satisfactory to both Italy and Ethiopia. The failure of these efforts has been previously recounted. (158) It was Mr. Eden who made a report of the conference to the League in September 1935. By that time it was evident that, although the Walwal decision had exonerated both nations from blame, Italy was still pushing hostilities against Ethiopia. It was at this juncture that a note of force crept into the British manoeuvres at Geneva. Mr. Eden told the Council on September 4: (159)

"In the position in which we find ourselves today, the nature of the task which lies before the Council is plain. It is our duty to use the machinery of the League that lies to our hand. Let us set it to work forthwith...."

Meanwhile, without waiting for League action, Britain began to make rapid naval preparations in the Mediterranean. It was reported that by September 20 virtually the entire British Home Fleet had been concen- (160)

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(158) See p. 16.

(159) O. J. November 1935, p. 1134.

(160) Dean, Vera M., "The League And The Italo-Ethiopian Crisis," Foreign Policy Reports, November 6, 1935, p. 218.

trated between Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, and was being reinforced by ships from more distant stations, by aircraft, and by troop movements in North Africa. This gesture on Britain's part, however, failed to reduce Mussolini to a more conciliatory policy. The Italian press simply launched a bitter anti-British campaign and the Fascist regiments in Africa made ready for their attack.

At this point, although it is not obvious in the actual proceedings before the League, Britain seems to have become nervous. The League had not yet taken definite steps in the direction of sanctions, and it began to appear that Britain might be left with a Mediterranean crisis on its hands. Sir Samuel Hoare is said to have approached France on September 24 on the subject of French aid if the British fleet were attacked by Italy, and to have discovered that the French were decidedly noncommittal. From this point on, a greater caution is noticeable in British policy.

This was the moment seized by Mussolini for opening his military offensive against Ethiopia. The League thereupon found Italy guilty of violating its Covenant obligations and proceeded to draft sanctions. Although the British delegate took a major part in this task, London seems to have been unwilling to come out too strongly against Italy without the certainty of full co-operation from the other League states, and France was definitely pulling away from any procedure that might weaken Italy to the advantage of Germany. The League sanctions were therefore not a marked success. Delayed in their application until November 18 because of Anglo-French manoeuvres for peace, the sanctions did not include an embargo upon certain products known to be essential to Italy's continuance of the con-

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(161) Dean, Vera M., op. cit., p. 219.

(162) Mussolini's troops entered Ethiopia October 3, 1935. (See p. 18).

(163) The Peterson-St. Quentin negotiations. (See pp. 23-24).

fluct. Notable among these, of course, were petroleum and the finished products of iron. The excuse given for not placing these articles on the list was that League members did not control their production. The real reason was probably that Britain could not risk a European war if that war were to find France and Britain in separate camps. (164)

As related earlier, France apparently capitalized this British fear to bring about the Hoare-Laval Plan. This plan successfully delayed the question of the oil sanction from early November, 1935, until the spring of 1936, but it appears that Britain had no love for the scheme. In fact, Mr. Eden practically invited the League to help him wash his hands of the whole deal by disapproving of it. Speaking to the Committee of Eighteen on December 12, 1935, he said: (165)

"The proposals now put forward are neither definitive nor sacrosanct. They are suggestions which it is hoped may make possible the beginning of negotiations. If the League does not agree with these suggestions, we shall make no complaint; indeed, we should cordially welcome any suggestions for their improvement....."

".....We will not only readily accept the judgment of our colleagues, but we will continue to use our best efforts to further the two objectives which have been constantly before us in this dispute - the restoration of peace and the maintenance of the authority of the League."

As has been already explained, when the way was once more open for the adoption of the oil sanction, in the spring of 1936, France again delayed the proceedings by proposing that another appeal be addressed by the Committee of Thirteen to the belligerents. Before the negotiations resulting from this appeal had come to an end, Germany's remilitarization of the Rhineland occurred, upsetting the League's routine and sealing the doom of Ethiopia. It was therefore April before Mr. Eden made other salient comments to the League Council on the Ethiopian situation. This time, in (167)

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(164) See p. 23.

(165) See pp. 28-29.

(166) O. J. Special Supplement No. 147, p. 8.

(167) See p. 32.

(168) See p. 33.

addition to urging further sanctions, Mr. Eden lodged a new British complaint against Italy by raising the question of the use of poison gas by the Italians in Africa. Some of Mr. Eden's remarks follow: (169)

"In the view of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, it is our manifest duty as Members of the League at least to maintain those economic and financial sanctions which have been put into force in connection with this dispute... His Majesty's Government....are ready and willing to consider, together with their fellow-Members of the League, the imposition of any further economic and financial sanctions that may be considered necessary and effective for the fulfillment of the obligation which we all of us bear, whether we like it or not, in this dispute.

"There is one element in this tragic war which I for one.... cannot pass over in silence: the alleged use of poison gas. It is not for me to analyse what the effects of the use of gas may have been upon the military fortunes of the belligerents. It is, however, in the judgment of His Majesty's Government, impossible not to take account of the evidence which exists and which goes to show that poison gas has been used by the Italian armies in their campaign against the Ethiopians, themselves utterly unprovided with any means of defense against this method of warfare, which has been outlawed by the nations.... As far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, so deeply do we feel the danger of leaving unnoticed the alleged use of poison gas that I would ask the Council during its present session formally to recall to all Members of the League signatories of the Protocol of 1925 the obligations they have thereby undertaken.."

The League did caution the belligerents, as a result of (170)

Mr. Eden's efforts, against the use of illegal modes of warfare. But it was too late to do much for the Ethiopian cause. The Italian victory was (171) an accomplished fact by the time of the next meeting of the League Council. It remained only for Mr. Eden, in common with other prominent delegates at Geneva, to make post mortem remarks over the Italo-Ethiopian affair. These remarks, on the part of Mr. Eden, took the shape of a frank admission of the League's failure in the Ethiopian cause, and a plea for the strengthening of League machinery in the future. The British delegate said, in part: (172)

"Yesterday, we all listened to an appeal by the Emperor of

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(169) O. J. April 1936, Part II, pp. 378-379.

(170) See pp. 34-35.

(171) See p. 38.

(172) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, pp. 34-35.



Ethiopia, delivered with a dignity which must have evoked the sympathy of each one of us. Not one of us here present can contemplate with any measure of satisfaction the circumstances in which this Assembly meets on this occasion. It is an occasion painful for us all.....

".....Had His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom any reason to believe that the maintenance of existing sanctions, or even the addition to them of other economic measures, would re-establish the position in Ethiopia, then it would be prepared, for its part, to advocate such a policy, and, if other Members of the League agreed, to join in its application. In view of the facts of the present situation in Ethiopia, His Majesty's Government find it impossible to entertain any such belief. In our view it is only military action - military action - that could now produce this result. I cannot believe that, in present world conditions, such military action could be considered a possibility.

"This is the situation with which we are confronted..... I can only repeat, and repeat with infinite regret, the opinion that I have already expressed.....that, in existing conditions, the continuation of the sanctions at present in force can serve no useful purpose. At the same time, it is the view of His Majesty's Government that this Assembly should not in any way recognize Italy's conquest over Ethiopia.....

"There remains.....the all-important subject of the League's future, to which speaker after speaker has referred. Are we to say, because we have failed on this occasion to make the rule of law prevail over the rule of force, that we are therefore finally to abandon this object? Certainly not. His Majesty's Government cannot accept such a view. How many efforts have been needed in history to realize objectives of far less significance to the ultimate destiny of the human race? With such an objective as this before us, our endeavour must be centered upon the task of reconstruction...."

So it was that Mr. Eden acknowledged the failure of British policy in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. That policy, originally conditioned by British imperial interests in Africa and in the Mediterranean, by a desire to preserve the League of Nations, and by an unwillingness to disrupt the peace of Europe, had broken down because of its complexity. Unable to accomplish the all-encompassing program embraced by these factors, the government apparently had singled out its most important aim, and had clung only to that. This aim seems to have been the preservation of European peace, and for its realization Downing Street had permitted a diplomatic defeat both for Great Britain and for the League.

## Chapter VII - France's Position.

It was France, more than any other member of the League, which seemed to desire, almost at any price, the conciliation of Italy in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. The discomfort of the French over the controversy and their determination to effect a speedy settlement, if possible, were evident to the League Council as early as August 3, 1935, during the Council session which limited the competence of the arbitration commission to the de facto circumstances of the Walwal incident, and agreed to the appointment of a fifth arbitrator to the Commission. At that time, M. Laval, announcing the French attitude, indulged in platitudinous comments about the lofty purposes of his country and of the League. He said:

(173)

"....The appointment of a fifth arbitrator permits the Council to hope that all will be done for a final settlement of the Walwal incident.

"The Council will thus have fulfilled once more its great and noble mission. All those throughout the world who remain attached to the Geneva institution will rejoice.

"We have achieved our immediate task; but the situation remains serious. As representative of France, my role is not at an end. In every way, I shall do all in my power to explore every possibility of conciliation. True to the obligations of the Covenant and in response to the unanimous feeling of my country, I am ready to assume this task and will carry it through to the end. We shall allow no chance of peace to escape us."

It is noticeable even at this date that it was "peace", not "justice", which was the object of M. Laval's concern. "Peace" continued to figure largely in the French remarks. On September 4, 1935, at the League Council meeting which was darkened by report of the failure of the Three Power Conference and by the introduction of Italy's memorandum on the Ethiopian situation indicating Il Duce's refusal to permit the Walwal decision to settle the Italo-Ethiopian differences, M. Laval made the follow-

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(173) O. J. August 1935, p. 969.

(174)

ing comments, apparently designed to smooth over the situation:

"France remains ardently attached to the work of conciliation undertaken under the authority of the League of Nations. She adheres to her belief that peace can still be ensured within the framework of the Covenant.

"It follows that the Council will have the wholehearted co-operation of the French representative in the fulfillment of its present task. I refuse to believe that this supreme effort is doomed to failure and that an equitable settlement cannot be found, one affording Italy the satisfaction she can legitimately claim without disregarding the fundamental rights of Ethiopian sovereignty.

"We shall listen to our Italian colleague in a moment. His grievances will, I am sure, be examined by the Council with the most careful attention. I feel certain that the representative of the Kingdom of Italy, on his side, will bring a spirit of broadminded conciliation to the consideration of any proposal that may be made to him.

".....We are all anxious to respect the obligations of the Covenant. We are all determined to serve the cause of peace."

When it became obvious that Italy had resorted to war in defiance of its Covenant obligations, France concurred in the indictment of the aggressor nation by the Council. France was represented on the Co-

ordination Committee and the Committee of Eighteen, and accepted the four original proposals of these committees with regard to sanctions. At the time of the Committee of Eighteen's first session, however, reports were current of secret negotiations at Paris with regard to effecting peace by giving Italy the concessions demanded by Mussolini as his price.

France was not one of the nations which agreed to participation in the proposed oil sanction, this subject being omitted entirely in the French correspondence with the Secretary-General of the League regarding the recommendations of the Co-ordination Committee. It was France, in fact, which seemed most determined, by various and sundry means, to keep the oil sanction from being added to the list of coercive measures against

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(174) O. J. November 1935, pp. 1134-1135.

(175) Ibid., p. 1225.

(176) O. J. Special Supplement No. 145, p. 8.

(177) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 131-154.

(178) The Peterson-St. Quentin negotiations. (See pp. 23-24).

(179)

Italy. As described in a preceding chapter, the Hoare-Laval Plan, which undoubtedly had its origin in the French mind, seems to have been advanced in December 1935 as a possible means of securing peace without having to push the League's case against Italy further. This plan, by which Italy would have been given a large slice of Ethiopian territory, was repudiated by public opinion in both France and Britain before Ethiopia itself refused the arrangement, but M. Laval's comments on the scheme to the Committee of Eighteen are interesting. Speaking on December

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12, he said in part:

"When, two months ago, the Council and Assembly were compelled to recognize that the effort made with a view to a peaceful settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict had failed, it was made clear on more than one occasion that, whatever the circumstances and whatever the course of the proceedings under the Covenant, the mission of conciliation devolving on the League of Nations was not terminated.....

"I, for my part, said that we must endeavor to seek, as speedily as possible, for an amicable settlement of the dispute, and I added that 'The French Government and the United Kingdom Government are agreed that their co-operation shall be exerted also in this sphere....'

"Such are the circumstances in which the Governments of France and the United Kingdom had felt that the moment had come to see whether it would not be possible to find a basis for an amicable settlement....

"The Italian and Ethiopian Governments were informed yesterday of our suggestions. We propose to communicate them shortly to the Council of the League.

"Our part will then have been played, and it will be for the League of Nations to settle what is to be done. We are confident at least that the League will appreciate the loyalty of our efforts, the only object of which (let me repeat) has been to expedite, within the framework of the League, the settlement of a conflict the continuance of which weighs so heavily upon the world."

There is a marked contrast between these comments and those made by Mr. Eden on the same occasion. It will be recalled that the British delegate referred to the proposals as "neither definitive nor sacrosanct," and announced that he would "cordially welcome suggestions

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for their improvement."

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(179) See pp. 28-30.

(180) O. J. Special Supplement No. 147, pp. 7-8.

(181) See p. 67.

Although the Hoare-Laval Plan delayed the oil sanction for several months, the Committee of Eighteen eventually appointed a Committee of Experts to consider the petroleum situation, and the report of these experts was presented on March 2. This time it was M. Flandin who made a move in behalf of France, and, incidentally, of Italy, by suggesting, before the Committee of Eighteen considered the report, that the Committee of Thirteen (the body charged with efforts at conciliation) should meet again (182) and "appeal to the belligerents to put an end to the war." The Committee of Thirteen, as related earlier, did make such an appeal on March 3, 1936, and it was while the League was occupied with negotiations resulting from this communication that the Italian armies won their victory in Ethiopia.

On April 20, 1936, after France's worst fears had been realized in Germany's remilitarization of the Rhineland, M. Paul-Boncour, speaking (184) before the League Council, bluntly expressed the French view thus:

"If we are to meet the present threats to Europe, we need peace in Ethiopia. The situation of a great country in relation to the League must be regulated so that that country may participate in the work of European reconstruction; and I note with satisfaction that the representative of Italy says his country is of the same mind."

In the same address, M. Paul-Boncour went on to explain to some extent the direction of French thinking. He said:

"My colleagues from the other continents will forgive me if I employ the word 'Europe' somewhat frequently. It is assuredly not that I forget that solidarity of which our institution is and must remain the expression. Still less is it because I am not aware that dark clouds are gathering to some extent throughout the world. But I feel sure that they will understand that various events.....direct our thoughts to that part of the world for which we are particularly responsible....."

This deliberate dismissal of the Ethiopian cause by France may seem cold-blooded, but there is no doubt that the policy was dictated by

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(182) See p. 32.

(183) Idem.

(184) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 38.

what the Quai d'Orsay considered to be a necessity for France. There is no doubt, either, that it was the French position which rendered the League impotent in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. Almost under French protection, the Fascist troops in Ethiopia drove Haile Selassie from his throne. It might have been expected that, in the final analysis, the French delegates would have offered some mitigating reflections upon their action, but no such gesture was forthcoming. The long address made by M. Blum at the Assembly meeting of June 30 to July 4, 1936, was concerned almost entirely with a plea to the nations to forego their armaments and their warlike policies, so that the world might look forward to an era of peace. There was no analysis of the situation through which the League had just come, and there was no concrete definition of the position of France in the family of nations. The speech was full of idealistic generalities, with the following paragraph furnishing perhaps the most tangible thesis: (185)

"France will endeavor to reconcile her loyalty to law and her will for peace. She does not wish to pronounce, upon acts that are contrary to law, any absolution that would amount to encouragement. She does not wish to call for war to provide reparation for right. But, above all, she is thinking of the Europe of tomorrow, and her ambition is to draw from the present disputes a contribution to real peace, organized peace, indivisible peace, disarmed peace. She sees only one sure method of wiping out the past, and that is to create a new future....."

The student who follows M. Blum's phrases has the feeling that he was seeking to create a nebulous atmosphere in which no shapes would stand out very clearly and in which the Ethiopian corpse might pass, in pleasantly veiled fashion, to an obscure grave.

## Chapter VIII - The Attitude Of The Soviet Union.

The Italo-Ethiopian affair found the newest member of the League of Nations, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, exhibiting a pronounced devotion to the doctrine of collective security and a willingness to use all measures necessary to ensure its observance. As M. Litvinov pointed out, this attitude on the part of his government was prompted neither by any unfriendliness toward Italy nor by any consideration of Russian relations with Ethiopia. It was rather, according to M. Litvinov, a case of saying:

"Plato is my friend, but international solidarity, the principle of collective security on which the peace of the world today is founded, loyalty to international undertakings, must for the time being drown the voice of friendship."

Whether Russia's uncompromising stand for sanctions was actually dictated by the altruistic reasons which M. Litvinov offered, or by the hope of strengthening a system which might serve the Soviet Government well in some future hour of need, is a matter of question. It is not easy to forget that the U.S.S.R., at the time of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy, had reason to fear possible aggression against its own territories from two directions, from Japan on the eastern frontier, and from Germany on the western frontier. That at least one of these potential enemies of Russia figured in M. Litvinov's calculations, is obvious from his own remarks before the League Council on September 6, 1935. On this occasion the Soviet delegate, in dealing with the subject of Italy's action, kept harking back to another instance of aggression in the League's history, and to the undesirability of repeating the failure which the League had sustained in that

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(186) The U.S.S.R. was admitted to the League on September 27, 1934.

(187) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, p. 35.

situation. This reference was worded in such a way that it unmistakably applied to Japanese penetration of Manchuria. M. Litvinov (188) said:

"We are faced by the direct threat of impending military operations between two Members of the League, by a threat of aggression which is not only not denied, but, on the contrary confirmed by the representative of Italy himself. Can we ignore this threat and forget the existence of Articles 10, 11, and 15 of the Covenant of the League? Would that not be a flagrant violation of the Covenant; would not its violation by the whole Council mean the complete repudiation and negation of the Covenant?"

"I may be reminded of a precedent when the Council of the League did not take all necessary measures for the prevention of a conflict between two Members of the League. But this is exactly a thing to be remembered now, for we all still feel in what measure that case weakened the League of Nations, diminished its authority and contributed to the creation of the politically unstable, menacing situation in which the world finds itself and even, may be, to the arising of the present conflict. The repetition of that precedent would certainly have a cumulative effect and, in its turn, would stimulate new conflicts more directly affecting the whole of Europe.....

".....I am bound to remind you that, in the unfortunate precedent I mentioned, there also were attempts at justifying military operations by references to backwardness, internal disorder, bad administration and so on. There is no doubt that, at any attempt at aggression, similar or other justifications will be put forward. In my mind, the League of Nations should stand firm on the principle that there cannot be justification for military operations except in self-defence, in the same way as no such justification is admitted by the Briand-Kellogg Pact forbidding war as an instrument of national policy..."

Whatever the motives behind the action of the Soviet Union, the policy represented by its delegates before the League is noticeable for its consistency, its forcefulness, and its straightforward phraseology. Beginning with the address of M. Litvinov on September 6, 1935, a part of which is quoted above, and continuing to the very end of the controversy, there was no doubt surrounding the stand of the U.S.S.R. Other representatives shrouded their meaning in a superabundance of words, or obscured the issue with a variety of diplomatic circum-



locations. Not so the Russian delegates; they invariably came to the point with a surprising and perhaps disconcerting clarity. For instance, M. Litvinov's thrusts in another portion of the speech already mentioned (189) included the following:

"I am sorry to say that I cannot agree with the way of arguing of the representative of Italy..... Nothing in the Covenant of the League entitles us...to discriminate between Members of the League as to their internal regime, the color of their skin, their racial distinctions or the stage of their civilization, nor accordingly to deprive some of them of privileges which they enjoy in virtue of their membership of the League, and, in the first place, of their inalienable right to integrity and independence. I venture to say that, for the development of backward peoples, for influencing their internal life, for raising them to a higher civilization, other means than military may be found."

Again, as the League prepared to indict Italy for its Covenant violations, it was M. Litvinov who said: (190)

"The decision which the Council is about to take marks the end of the stage of speeches and declarations. I will therefore make no new statement. The attitude which my Government is taking in the problem now under consideration has been sufficiently defined by me. That attitude is determined by the principles which I have stated both in the Council and in the Assembly, and those principles leave no doubt as to the response my Government will give to any proposals which the Council may make for safeguarding the peace in Africa, as well as in other continents, and for maintaining the Covenant of the League of Nations."

True to the representations of its delegates, the Soviet Union cast its full weight in the direction of sanctions when the time came. All the recommendations of the Co-ordination Committee, including (191) the proposed oil sanction, were accepted by Moscow. Since Russia, next to Rumania, was the largest League exporter of petroleum products to (192) Italy (supplying 15.2% of Italy's total oil supply in 1935), the willing-

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(189) Op. cit., p. 1142.

(190) Ibid., p. 1212.

(191) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 296-299.

(192) O. J. Special Supplement No. 148, p. 82.

ness of the Moscow government to co-operate in the extension of sanctions to this commodity may be taken as evidence of a concrete desire to assist in the League undertaking.

Having decided upon its course, the Soviet Union appears to have been scornful of attempts to gloss over the situation, or to offer Mussolini a price for peace. At the extraordinary session of the League Council in London from March 14 to March 24, 1936, called to discuss Germany's action in remilitarizing the Rhineland, M. Litvinov not only made a reference to the Ethiopian affair in the same breath with the German menace, but also indulged in what seems to have been a pointed reference to the Hoare-Laval Plan and like negotiations. He said: (193)

"This is the third time, in the short period of eighteen months during which the Soviet Union has been a Member of the League of Nations, that its representative on the Council of the League has had to speak on the subject of a breach of international obligations.

"The first time was in connection with the infringement by Germany of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty. The second time was on the occasion of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. The third, today, is in consequence of the unilateral infringement by Germany of both the Versailles Treaty and the Locarno Pact.

"In all three cases the Soviet Union was either formally disinterested because it took no part in the treaties which had been infringed, as in the case of those of Versailles and Locarno, or, as in the case of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, its own interests were not in the least affected.

"These circumstances have not in the past prevented, and will not in the present case prevent, the representative of the Soviet Union from taking his place among those Members of the Council who register in the most decisive manner their indignation at a breach of international obligations, condemn it, and support the most effective measures to avert similar infringements in the future.

".....One cannot struggle for the collective organization of security without adopting collective measures against breaches of international obligations.

"We do not, however, class among such measures collective capitulation in the face of the aggressor, in the face of an infringement of treaties, or collective encouragement of such infringements.

and still less collective agreement to a bonus for the aggressor by adopting a basis of agreement, or other plans, acceptable or profitable to the aggressor."

M. Potemkine, the Russian delegate at the League Council session at Geneva on April 20, 1936, echoed the sentiments of his fellow-countrymen when he pursued the subject of League obligations and their (194) evasion in this fashion:

".....The international prestige of the League and the effectiveness of its action would be quite different if all the Members without exception had adopted an uncompromising attitude towards any breach of international undertakings and any clear act of aggression.

"They must adopt this attitude, not only at Geneva, but everywhere. Their stand against the aggressor, as provided for in the Covenant of the League of Nations, must be both collective and individual. ....The experience of the past few months has brought...disappointment to the supporters of the League. They are distressed to see, that even within the League itself, there is a tendency to treat an aggressor with more tolerance and even indulgence the more arrogant and tenacious he shows himself to be...."

There were few speakers before the Council who demonstrated the ability of these Russians to call a spade a spade! The Soviet delegates were still evincing this unique ability at the League session of June 26 to July 4, 1936, when certain other representatives were cloaking the sad end of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy with lengthy discussions of possible reforms in the League machinery. The minutes of (195) the Council session of July 26, with regard to M. Litvinov's stand read:

".....For his own part, he was not so sure by any means that the League needed reform; and, until proof was forthcoming that it did, he proposed to reserve his attitude on the general issue of reform....

"As he saw the position, the League as it stood and the Covenant as it stood had not broken down... There was reason to deplore the failure to make full use of all the weapons provided by the Covenant for the defense and protection of the independence of all States Members....."

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(194) Op. cit., Part II, pp. 380-381.

(195) O. J. July 1936, Part II, pp. 752-753.

Before the Assembly on July 1, 1936, M. Litvinov was  
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equally frank. He began as follows:

"We have not here to complete a page in the history of the League of Nations, a page in the history of international life which it will be impossible for us to read without a feeling of bitterness. We have to liquidate a course of action which was begun in fulfillment of our obligations as Members of the League to guarantee the independence of one of our fellow Members, but which was not carried to its conclusion. Each one of us must feel his measure of responsibility and of blame, which is not identical for all, and which depends, not only on what each of us did in fact, but also on the measure of our readiness to support every common action required by the circumstances....."

It may have been, as suggested in the opening pages of this chapter, that the Soviet Union was merely serving its own best interests by supporting League action against Italy in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. But, on the face of it, the Soviet delegates made one of the most impressive of all the stands before the League.

## Chapter IX - The Attitude Of The Small Nations.

In general, the small states in the League, throughout the Italo-Ethiopian controversy, displayed a desire to strengthen the League's system of collective security by punishing an aggressor nation. This was no more than natural, since the very existence of the smaller states depended, in many instances, upon the maintenance of the rule of law which Italy challenged. There was, however, no unanimity of order displayed by the small nations in discharging their Covenant obligations. Their action ranged from reluctance to enthusiasm, depending upon the dictates of their particular interests in the situation in hand. Thus the Latin-American countries, which were remote from the scene of conflict and were enjoying a profitable trade with Italy, appeared loath to apply sanctions; whereas Portugal and the Union of South Africa, which feared that Italy's project might signalize a re-distribution of African territory, were especially vigorous in their pleas for stringent action against the aggressor. Other equally good contrasts may be drawn. Whatever their varying degrees of enthusiasm, however, only three small states came out flatly against the imposition of sanctions upon Italy. These three were Albania, Austria, and Hungary. All the other states, with the exception of Paraguay, carried out their Covenant obligations.

In the cases of Albania, Austria, and Hungary, all three of the countries were so closely bound to Italy by economic and political ties that their refusal to apply sanctions came as a surprise to no one. Even Haile Selassie said of them, as he spoke before the League, that "their connections with Italy impelled them to refuse to take any measures whatsoever to stop Italian aggression," a fact which the Negus

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"noted with grief, but without surprise." Albania, to all practical purposes, was an Italian protectorate, so dependent upon Italian capital

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that a break with her patroness would have been unthinkable. In Austria, the government of Dr. von Schuschnigg was under a debt of gratitude to

Mussolini for his assistance in combatting the Nazi putsch of 1934, and the personal tie between the rulers in Vienna and Rome seems to have de-

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termined Dr. von Schuschnigg's policy. In the case of Hungary, Italian support was deemed necessary if Hungary were to secure an eventual re-

vision of the Treaty of Trianon, so that there was no hesitancy in Buda-

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pest over espousing the Italian cause in preference to the League cause.

These countries were joined by a fourth non-sanctionist government on October 31, 1935, when Paraguay, which had not openly opposed League action

against Italy prior to this, suddenly telegraphed the Secretary-General at Geneva with regard to Proposals Nos. I, II, III, IV, and V of the Co-

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ordination Committee:

"According to national Constitution decisions contemplated in your cable must be taken by Congress. In view of conditions obtaining in this country, the Government does not deem it desirable for the present to consider a resolution regarding the measures proposed."

With the exception of the four countries mentioned above, all the member states of the League applied sanctions. Among this number were several whose allegiance to the League was a matter of some surprise. Bulgaria, for instance, a revisionist nation linked with Italy by a

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(197) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, p. 24.

(198) Tynbee, Arnold J., op. cit., v. II, p. 430. The author speaks of a considerable loan made by Italy to Albania, and says, "This was the largest of several loans....which, in effect, put Albania in Italy's pocket."

(199) Ibid., v. II, pp. 87-89.

(200) Ogg, Frederick A., "Hungary's Need Of Italian Support," Current History, November 1934, p. 240.

(201) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, p. 218.

dynastic marriage and by a common suspicion of Yugoslavia, came out in  
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 favor of all the proposed sanctions except the oil embargo, and on this  
 score was merely silent, as were many of the other League states. Poland,  
 (203)  
 likewise, favored all the sanctions except the oil embargo, upon which  
 the government made no comment, although the policy of the Polish  
 government toward the League in recent years might have forecast a re-  
 fusual to co-operate. Spain and Switzerland, both near neighbors of the  
 formidable Italy, did not let this fact deter them from putting the League  
 measures into operation, although Switzerland did make certain reservations  
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 designed to protect her traditional neutrality. Even the Irish Free State,  
 whose hostility to London policies might have prompted the government to  
 shirk the responsibility of sanctions, came out strongly in favor of League  
 action, and, indeed, Mr. de Valera's address before the League Assembly,  
 on July 2, 1936, was one of the strongest pleas heard by that body for a  
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 strengthening of the League system. Mr. de Valera said, in part:

"However it may be disguised, it can only be with a feeling  
 of bitter humiliation that each successive speaker has, during these days,  
 come to this tribune.....

"Over fifty nations, we banded ourselves together for col-  
 lective security. Over fifty nations, we have now to confess publicly  
 that we must abandon the victim to his fate.....

"Nothing surely could be more disastrous than to abandon  
 ourselves to despair, but is it not equally the height of folly to think  
 we can go on just as if nothing had happened?.....

"The problems that distract Europe should not be left to the  
 soldiers to decide. They should be tackled now by the statesmen.....  
 I shall be told that there are difficulties. Of course there are diffi-  
 culties. There are difficulties in every direction that lies open to us,  
 but in which direction are there the least difficulties? Are there more  
 difficulties along the way of peaceful adjustment by conciliation or  
 arbitration than along the alternative way of a modern war?"

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(202) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 70-80.

(203) Ibid., pp. 233-241.

(204) O. J. Special Supplement No. 139, p. 106.

(205) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, pp. 47-49.

Among the nations whose loyalty to the League was less a matter of surprise, but no less a source of satisfaction, were the Scandinavian countries, the overseas dominions of Britain, the Little Entente states, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Holland, and Belgium. Of these, Belgium's devotion to her duty was tinged with the greatest wariness, inspired, perhaps, by the fear of Germany which she shared with France. At any rate, the Belgian delegate may be noted on several occasions as facilitating the French efforts to postpone or nullify effective action against the aggressor. (206) Holland, on the other hand, seemed to share the wholehearted attitude of the Scandinavian countries, and went the whole way in the matter of sanctions, even agreeing on an oil embargo, which would have been a serious blow to the trade of Dutch India. (207) Norway, also, was among those states agreeing to the oil sanction, despite the profits of the Norwegian tanker fleet engaged in the petroleum trade. (208) The Little Entente states, Greece, and Turkey had no love for Italy under any circumstances, and would naturally have stood firmly with the League against Italian aggression, although Rumania's profitable oil industry might have - but did not - prevent Bucharest from agreeing to the petroleum sanction. (209) Portugal, as already noted, had especial interests in Africa because of colonial possessions there, and this fact, together with traditional Anglo-Portuguese co-operation in matters of foreign policy, may have explained the particular devotion to his duties which was displayed by the Portuguese delegate.

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(206) It was M. van Zeeland, the Belgian delegate, who suggested the "mandate" to France and Britain. (O.J. Special Supplement No. 146, p. 9). It was also M. van Zeeland who argued for "a realistic and pragmatic aspect," rather than an idealistic view of the situation, and who, as President of the Assembly, ruled that the Ethiopian resolution presented on July 3, 1936, must be referred to the General Committee, rather than being voted on. (O.J. Special Sup. No. 151, p. 60; p. 70).

(207) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 200-206.

(208) Ibid., pp. 218-229.

(209) Ibid., pp. 244-252.



Senhor de Vasconcellos, as Chairman of the Co-ordination Committee and the Committee of Eighteen. With regard to the British dominions, however, only the Union of South Africa had actual concern in the conflict, so that the ardent co-operation of the delegates from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada is a matter of some note. It was Mr. Riddell, of Canada, who first (210) proposed the oil sanction, and it was Mr. Bruce, of Australia, who said: (211)

"Last autumn, with the League's action in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, a new hope came to millions of men and women throughout the world - a hope that the phrase 'collective security' had reality and that, through the action of the League States and the goodwill of great Powers now outside the League, the collective judgment of the nations would ensure justice in the world. That hope today is extinguished. It is for us....to rekindle it and by wise action ensure its realization for all time...."

Sir James Parr, of New Zealand, dissented, even on July 2, 1936, at lifting (212) the sanctions against Italy, saying:

"...The Government of New Zealand still favors sanctions. It favors their maintenance and intensification. If there were an effective majority of the League ready to go along that road, the New Zealand Government would travel it with them. But one cannot blind oneself to facts... I am therefore instructed by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that, if there can be no generally accepted determination by our colleagues here to continue sanctions, I am to acquiesce, on behalf of New Zealand, in their removal. But the acquiescence of my Government is on the clear understanding that the whole question of the Geneva peace structure will be considered at the September meeting of the Assembly...."

"...My country still adheres firmly to the League of Nations, believing as she does that, notwithstanding its recent misfortune, the League still offers the only promise of security for the small countries of the world."

And that sentence, coming from the delegate whose country is the most remote of all from Geneva, seems to hold the true explanation of the adherence of the small nations to the League. They believed that it was "the only promise of security for the small countries of the world."

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(210) See p. 23.

(211) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, p. 40.

(212) Ibid., p. 49.

## Chapter X - Germany As The Onlooker.

It is a strange fact that one of the most important roles in the drama of the Italo-Ethiopian controversy before the League was played entirely off-stage. This was the role of Nazi Germany, which had no representative at Geneva, and which remained aloof from the whole conflict, neither participating in the sanctions against Italy, nor expanding its Italian trade. Why such a state should have played a determinative part in the African dispute, it is difficult at first to understand. But the simple explanation is that the League members dared not delve too deeply into the Italo-Ethiopian fracas on their front steps, lest Germany, on their back steps, be given the opportunity to conceit a deeper mischief in Europe than Mussolini was conjuring up in Africa.

The League's fears of Germany went back at least as far as October 1933, when Hitler suddenly withdrew his delegation from the disarmament conference at Geneva and announced Germany's intention to leave the League. This event served notice on Europe that Germany would no longer seek a rectification of her problems through collective international machinery. It gave credence to the rumors of German rearmament, and put every anti-revisionist country in Europe on its guard. Germany was not the only revisionist nation, but it was the only revisionist state potentially strong enough to press its claims. German aspirations, moreover, constituted a direct threat to the territorial integrity of half a dozen countries containing German minorities, and represented an indirect menace to every nation in Europe which believed that war could no longer be localised. France, in particular, suffered a traditional uneasiness from saber-rattlings across the Rhine, and

Britain could not help being alarmed if Nazi designs ran to aircraft and submarine construction. Eastern Europe had even greater cause for anxiety, because it was in this direction that Hitler's "Mein Kampf" indicated that German aggression would take place.

By the end of 1934, in the month of the Walvar incident, the re-armament of the Reich, although not officially announced, was conceded to be a fait accompli.<sup>(213)</sup> The German situation was therefore paramount in the minds of statesmen at Geneva at the time of Ethiopia's earliest appeals to the League. It was this German factor which produced the Franco-Italian rapprochement culminating in the Rome Accord of January 7, 1935.<sup>(214)</sup> The Franco-Italian solidarity was further cemented by the action of Reichsmarschall on March 11, 1935, when he openly advised the world of the existence of a German air force, and on March 16, 1935, when he announced the re-establishment of military conscription in the Reich with a view to creating a peace-time Nazi army of 550,000 men. These two proclamations left the chief military clauses of the Versailles Treaty in shreds, and produced a near-panic among certain League members.

At the Stresa Conference of April 14, 1935, Britain, France, and Italy agreed on a united front in League discussions of the German manoeuvre, and on April 16, 1935, these nations were all signatories of the Council resolution rebuking Hitler in the name of the League.<sup>(215)</sup>

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(213) Popper, David H., "European Military Policies," Foreign Policy Review, May 1, 1936, p. 47.

(214) See p. 3 ff.

(215) O. J. May 1935, p. 351 ff. The resolution, while not so stern in tone as it might have been, did declare that "Germany has failed in the duty which lies upon all the Members of the international community to respect the undertakings they have contracted," and requested a committee "to define....the economic and financial measures which might be applied, should in the future a State....endanger peace by the unilateral repudiation of its international obligations."

Hitler replied to this move by challenging the Council's right to pass judgment against Germany, by rejecting the resolution as an attempted discrimination against Germany, and by reserving the right to reveal at a later date the full attitude of the Reich. (216)

As a result of the German situation, divergent trends became evident in the policies of Britain and France. Britain adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the Reich, eventually concluding an Anglo-German naval agreement, by which Hitler was left free to extend his re-  
armament program, within limits, even to the building of naval vessels. (217) France, on the other hand, refused to make any concessions to Hitler, and immediately sought to reinforce her security by means of alliances with other potential enemies of Germany. On May 2, 1935, a Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance was signed. There was a flare of resentment in Germany on the subject of this pact, which Hitler professed to regard as a violation of France's Locarno obligations and a direct thrust at the Reich. This bellicose attitude on the part of Germany, particularly since it caught the French at a period of temporary estrangement from Britain, rendered Italy all the more important to France as an ally. In this way, Germany's off-stage role, even in the spring of 1935, gave promise of being a determining factor, certainly so far as France was concerned, in the attitude of the League toward Italy's African project.

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(216) Dean, Vera Micheles, "Europe's Struggle For Security," Foreign Policy Reports, June 19, 1935, p. 102.

(217) Visetelly, Frank H., and associates, "The New International Year Book, 1935," p. 281: "On June 18 the Reich scored a notable diplomatic triumph by concluding a naval agreement with Britain in which Hitler agreed to limit the proposed German fleet to 35 per cent of British naval tonnage. By thus giving official recognition to Germany's violation of the Versailles Treaty, Britain nullified the Stresa agreement."

(218) Dean, Vera Micheles, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

(219) Ibid., p. 103.

Not only was Hitler assisting Mussolini, but also Mussolini was destined to assist Hitler before the conclusion of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, in spite of the fact that, in both cases, the assistance may have been entirely unintentional. Hitler, by distracting Geneva's attention to the banks of the Rhine, was helping Mussolini to tie the hands of the League with regard to his African exploits. Mussolini, in successfully demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the collective system of security, was proving a truth which Hitler had long suspected and must have wished ardently to see exemplified. On the face of it, co-operation of this sort might have seemed to merit a closer relationship between the two dictators, but there was another factor which kept the two governments apart. This was the question of their conflicting aims in Austria. Hitler's Austrian activities of 1934, resulting in the assassination of Chancellor Dollfuss, had so aroused the ire of Italy that the breach between Berlin and Rome could not be easily healed. There was no indication, therefore, of an Italo-German rapprochement at any time during the Ethiopian controversy. Each of the two states seems, nevertheless, to have profited from the action of the other during 1935 and 1936.

As Mussolini's troops in Africa piled victory upon victory and the League delayed in taking decisive action, with the differences between French and British policy becoming more and more apparent, Nazi Germany, in the spring of 1936, made another bold stroke. This time, following on the heels of the French Chamber's ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance, Hitler, on March 7, denounced

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(220) Dean, Vera Micheles, op. cit., p. 91.

the Locarno agreement, and marched the Nazi troops into the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland. Probably no other event in Europe could more effectively have confirmed France in her determination to ward off stringent League action against Italy. Hitler, having made the beginning of the African hostilities easy for Mussolini, was now making their unimpeded conclusion equally easy. Mussolini's estrangement from the League, on the other hand, was an almost certain guarantee that Hitler's Rhineland designs would go unchallenged. That is exactly what happened. France and Belgium invoked the League Covenant against Germany, and the League Council, on March 19, declared the Reich guilty of violating the Locarno Pact and the Versailles Treaty. But no steps were taken to punish these violations, and the German troops stayed in the Rhineland.

The off-stage player in the Ethiopian drama, Herr Hitler, had, in one fell stroke, determined the fate of an African nation and pulled a plum for himself from the middle at Geneva.

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(221) League of Nations Document C.112.N.52.1936.

(222) O. J. April 1936, Part I, p. 340.

## Chapter XI - The United States Of America As The Benevolent Neutral.

"Not to be drawn into the war...and not to contribute to the prolongation of the war" - in such fashion did Mr. Cordell Hull, Secretary of State of the United States of America, sum up the policy of his government toward the African controversy. The occasion for his comment was his letter of reply to Chairman de Vasconcelles, of the League Co-ordination Committee, who had transmitted the decisions of his committee to the United States in an effort to determine what the American reaction to sanctions against Italy would be. Mr. Hull acknowledged this communication in a spirit of apparent approval, but it is noticeable that he did not comment specifically upon any of the proposals of the League committee. Emphasizing the idea that American traditions had always favored the peaceful settlement of differences between nations, he spoke cordially of "the prevention of war" and of "the sanctity of treaties," but his terms were decidedly general. With regard to "the situation now unhappily existing between Ethiopia and Italy," he pointed out that the United States government "put forth every practicable effort to aid in the preservation of peace," and that "when it was found that hostilities actually existed between Ethiopia and Italy," his government, "acting on its own initiative" and "in advance of action by other Governments," promptly "announced a number of basic measures primarily to avoid being drawn into the war and which would also not be without effect in discouraging the war." He then reviewed for the committee the nature of the measures taken in the United States, but he did not commit himself to any definite promise of American co-operation with the League in its applica-

tion of sanctions.

The truth of the matter was that the United States was experiencing a profound reaction away from the sympathies of 1917 which had drawn the country into a European struggle. The people and the government, perhaps still smarting under the memory of unpaid World War debts, were obsessed with the idea of non-belligerency, almost at any cost, in the future. It was apparently felt that the seeds of dangerous conflict were present in the Ethiopian affair, and the primary concern of the United States was to maintain a "hands off" policy. The plight of Ethiopia undoubtedly aroused sympathy, and some American officials may have favored a cautious support of the collective system in international relations for the maintenance of the rule of law, but these considerations were of secondary importance as compared with the more immediate desire for American neutrality.

The position of the United States was a curious one. As a non-member of the League, the country was theoretically not involved in any machinery which Geneva might set up in an effort to force Italy to obey her treaty obligations, but as a matter of actual practice, the effect of economic sanctions was bound to be felt in America. Cut off from other markets, Italy would be sure to seek necessary war materials in the United States, and the government would be pushed to a decision, either to co-operate with the League in its program, or to risk the possibilities of a war-time trade with an outlaw nation. Either choice presented embarrassing consequences for a nation bent on neutrality. In the event of American co-operation with the League, could the United States remain unentangled if Italy precipitated a war against sanctionist nations? On the



other hand, if the government permitted an unrestricted war-time trade with Italy, might not American neutrality be equally jeopardized, and in a less honorable fashion? There was the further factor of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact. This pact did not require its signatories to take action against a nation which resorted to war in defiance of the terms of the treaty, but it might be interpreted to carry some sort of moral responsibility in such a case, especially for Mr. Kellogg's own country. Officials in Washington, reflecting on these items during the hot summer of 1935, found themselves confronted with perplexities almost as great as those animating European capitals at the same time.

The policy finally decided upon by the United States was embodied in a joint resolution passed by the Congress on August 24, 1935, and communicated to the League by Mr. Hull in the letter to Senhor de Vasconcellos which has been previously mentioned. This Neutrality Act, passed at a time when Il Duce's troops had not yet begun a major offensive against Haile Selassie's territories, represented the hurried effort of an American Congress, on the eve of its adjournment, to legislate the United States out of a possible war. There were nine sections of the act, which may be briefly summarized as follows:

SECTION 1 empowered the President, "upon the outbreak or during the progress of war between, or among, two or more foreign States," to "proclaim such fact," and to provide immediate embargoes upon the exportation of "arms, ammunition, or implements of war from any place in the United States, or possessions of the United States, to any port of such belligerent States, or to any neutral port for transshipment to, or for the use of, a belligerent country." The President was further given the power to decide what articles should be considered "arms, ammunition, or implements of war," and to extend his original embargo "to other States as and when they may become involved in such war." This section of the act was to be effective for six months, that is, until February 29, 1936.

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(224) Public Resolution No. 67, 74th Congress (S. J. Resolution 178).

**SECTION 2** set up the National Munitions Control Board to carry out the provisions of the act. This board was to be permanent, and all manufacturers, exporters and importers of arms, ammunition, and implements of war were required to register with the board, which was to publish annually data regarding American individuals and firms engaged in the munitions industry and trade.

**SECTION 3**, which supplemented Section 1, provided that whenever the President issued a war proclamation and a list of embargoed materials, it should automatically become unlawful for American vessels to engage in the prohibited trade.

**SECTIONS 4, 5, 6** elaborated the President's power to regulate or prevent the shipment from American ports of men, fuel, arms, and other supplies to warships, tenders, or supply ships of belligerents; permitted him to fix the conditions under which the submarines of any foreign nation, not necessarily a belligerent, might use American ports and territorial waters; and authorized him to proclaim that American citizens travelling on the ships of belligerents did so at their own risk. It was left to the discretion of the President to determine when the existing circumstances required these provisions to be put into effect.

**SECTIONS 7, 8, 9** fixed the penalty for violators of the act, provided that the whole law should not be invalidated if any part of it should be held unconstitutional, and appropriated funds out of the Treasury to be spent by the Secretary of State in administering the act.

The terms of this Neutrality Act gave the President considerable latitude in choosing the moment for proclaiming that a state of war existed, in the enumeration of articles to be embargoed, and in the possible extension of the embargo to other countries which might become involved in the war as it progressed. It seems particularly important that the last provision, that of extending the embargo to other nations, was not made mandatory, because, as the act was worded, the President would not be obliged to apply the embargo to League members if they should become involved in hostilities as the result of their attempts to enforce sanctions.

In one important particular, however, the President was not given discretionary power. He could not discriminate between the original belligerents in applying an arms embargo. To this extent, therefore,

he could not act differently toward victim and aggressor, and he would thus be handicapped in facilitating the application of sanctions by the League. At the instigation of the Administration, the McReynolds Bill, which would have allowed him to make this discrimination, had been introduced, but the Senate had taken the view that to allow the President to differentiate in this respect between belligerents was a risky procedure which, by requiring the United States to take sides morally, might endanger the much desired neutrality of the American nation. A bill reflecting this sentiment of the Senate was therefore enacted in preference to the McReynolds Bill, but it is noticeable that Section 1 of the Neutrality Act, as passed, was to be in force only six months. This meant that in the 1936 session of the Congress another chance would be given to argue the question of discrimination between the victim and the aggressor.

The Neutrality Act of 1935 was notably silent on one other question, that of money and credits for the belligerents; but this did not necessarily imply an unwillingness on the part of the government to co-operate in this phase of sanctions. The "Johnson Act", of April 15, 1934, had already prohibited loans to governments in default on their financial obligations to the United States, and Italy, in arrears on war debt payments, was consequently prohibited from seeking money and credits in America.

The Congress was not in session on October 3, 1935, when the first Italian bombs fell on Ethiopian villages. The effectiveness of America's stand on the African controversy therefore rested with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promptly made it evident that his government would give a broad interpretation to existing legislation, and that it

would supplement its legal authority by moral suasion. On October 5, the President issued a proclamation recognizing a state of war between Ethiopia and Italy, and placing an immediate embargo upon a wide variety of articles susceptible of direct military use. News of this action on the part of the United States was received at Geneva on October 7, the day on which Italy announced the fall of Adowa and on which the League Council accepted the report of the Committee of Six, pronouncing that "the Italian Government has resorted to war in disregard of its covenants...." The United States, therefore, although not a member of the League, was slightly in advance of the League itself in reaching a decision on the Ethiopian dispute.

Meanwhile, on October 6, a second proclamation from President Roosevelt was released in the United States. In this message, the President warned American nationals against travel on belligerent vessels, and stated, in marked contrast to the traditional position of the United States with regard to neutral rights on the high seas, that such travel would be strictly at the individual's own risk. The warning was further amplified to include "transactions of any character with either of the belligerents." In other words, American trade with foreign nations at war was no longer to enjoy governmental protection. It was a pronouncement full of significance for a world unaccustomed to such utterances from the giant of the Western Hemisphere. At the moment, the nations assembled at Geneva could rejoice, because it simplified their immediate task, but the news could not have fallen as an unmingled blessing upon League ears. Would it apply

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(225) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, p. 319.

(226) See p. 20.

(227) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 320-321.

to American trade with England, say, or with France, if those nations were suddenly to find themselves at war with Italy? Geneva, coordinating the communication from across the Atlantic, could not fail to speculate uneasily.

The Executive warnings sounded in America on October 5 and 6 were repeated and elaborated throughout the autumn of 1933. Statements from the President and the Secretary of State continued to be issued, and (228) were communicated to the League by Mr. Hull. On October 10, the Secretary of State cautioned the public against "risky and temporary trade" with belligerent nations, and reminded business men that "the war is seriously handicapping business between all countries, and that the sooner the war is terminated the sooner the restoration and stabilization of business." On October 20, the President stated that "the American Government is keeping informed as to all shipments consigned for export to both belligerents," and the Secretary of State again warned against "transactions to derive war profits at the expense of human lives and human misery." (229) On November 15, Mr. Hull was even less veiled in his comments, saying:

"The American people are entitled to know that there are certain commodities such as oil, copper, trucks, tractors, scrap iron and scrap steel which are essential war materials, although not actually arms, ammunition or implements of war and that, according to recent Government trade exports, a considerably increased amount of these is being exported for war purposes. This class of trade is directly contrary to the spirit of the recent neutrality Act.

"The Administration is closely observing the trend and volume of exports to these countries and within a few days the Department of Commerce expects to have complete detailed lists of all commodities exported to the belligerents which will enable exact comparison with lists for the same period last year."

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(228) Op. cit., pp. 322-323.

(229) Ibid., p. 322.

On November 23, the Department of Commerce sent out letters to American shipping concerns, calling to the specific attention of owners and operators of ships under mortgage to the government, the fact that "the carrying of essential war materials such as those mentioned in the statement of the Secretary of State, November 15, destined for either of the belligerents is distinctly contrary to the policy of the government." (230)

In spite of governmental efforts, the trade of the United States with Italy in materials useful for war did increase, but, even so, furnished only a small percentage of Italy's total importation of these materials. In the case of petroleum products, for example, the exports of the United States to Italy for the year 1935 were estimated by the League (231) to be 12.5% of Italy's total petroleum importation for that year. In comparison with the fact that, for the same period of time, the Dutch West Indies furnished 13.4% of Italy's petroleum imports; the U.S.S.R., 15.2%; (232) and Rumania, 44.6%, it could not be argued that it was America which stood in the way of the oil sanction at Geneva. It was not improbable, moreover, that the United States would have taken more stringent measures to stop the export of petroleum products to Italy if the League states had actually enlarged their embargo list to include this commodity. Certainly the administration at Washington had shown itself willing to co-operate in other measures of the League embargo.

The Neutrality Act of 1935 was renewed for one year, with one (233) or two minor amendments, by the United States Congress on February 29, 1936. The most important of the amendments was called to the attention of the

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(230) Department of Commerce News Release, as quoted by Dulles, Allen W., and Armstrong, Hamilton Fish, "Can We Be Neutral?", p. 71

(231) O. J. Special Supplement No. 146, pp. 62-63.

(232) *Idea*.

(233) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 322-323.

(234)

American people by a statement from President Roosevelt, who said:

"...A new and definite step is taken by providing in substance that, when an embargo becomes effective, obligations of any belligerent Government issued after the date of the proclamation shall not be purchased or sold in this country, and no loan or credit extended to such Government, but with the authority of the Executive, if our interests require, to except from the prohibition commercial credits and short-term loans in aid of legal transactions. In addition, it in general exempts the other republics of this hemisphere from the operation of the law."

The President, who had just renewed his proclamations of  
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the preceding autumn, went on to say:

"The policies announced by the Secretary of State and myself at the time of and subsequent to the issuance of the original proclamation will be maintained in effect. It is true that the high moral duty I have urged on our people of restricting their exports of essential war materials to either belligerent to approximately the normal peace-time basis has not been the subject of legislation. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that greatly to exceed that basis, with the result of earning profits not possible during peace, and especially with the result of giving actual assistance to the carrying-on of war, would serve to magnify the very evil of war which we seek to prevent. This being my view, I renew the appeal made last October to the American people that they so conduct their trade with belligerent nations that it cannot be said that they are seizing new opportunities for profit or that, by changing their peace-time trade, they give aid to the continuance of war."

The swift denouement of the Italo-Ethiopian story within the next few weeks left the United States of America no alternative other than a revocation of the various proclamations which had been in operation for the past nine months, and accordingly, on June 20, 1936, the President issued new messages, countermanding his earlier executive orders.  
(236) These June proclamations, lifting the embargo of the United States against the belligerents, were forwarded to Geneva, where, within a week, the League Council was to meet for the purpose of writing finis to the Italo-Ethiopian chapter.

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(234) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, p. 325.

(235) *Idem*.

(236) O. J. Special Supplement No. 150, pp. 325-326.

## Chapter XII - Summary And Conclusions.

In summary, the Italo-Ethiopian controversy offers little justification of Italian action. All indications point to a deliberate attack by the Fascist troops upon a nation totally unequipped to cope with the ruthless, imperialistic designs of a European Power. Had Il Duce's intention not been one of deliberate conquest, Rome would have permitted the Walwal decision, which exonerated both Italy and Ethiopia of responsibility for the incidents of December 1934, to have constituted a settlement of the differences between the two states. Instead of choosing this course, however, Mussolini resorted to widening the breach by means of both diplomatic and military maneuvers. The very elaborateness of these maneuvers, in Geneva and on the Ethiopian frontiers, smacked of premeditation. The Italian contentions with regard to the menacing character of Haile Selassie's regime were, moreover, disproven by several factors. One of these was that no European Power with territory adjacent to Ethiopia had ever complained to the League of a dangerous situation on the African frontiers. Another was that the situation in Ethiopia had been a matter of knowledge to the European states, including Italy, which had sponsored Ethiopia's entrance to the League in 1923, and at that time domestic conditions in the realm of the Negus, although worse than they were in 1935, had not been considered, even by Italy, as a deterrent in  
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the matter of Ethiopia's admission to the League. It therefore appears

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(237) O. J. November 1935, p. 1615. The Committee of Thirteen reported: "The admission of Ethiopia to the League of Nations, with Italy's support, is indeed a factor of obvious importance.... Ethiopia was unanimously admitted in 1923, on the report of the Sixth Committee of the Assembly...which....had considered whether the Empire fulfilled the requisite conditions for being admitted...." (Italy was represented on this Sixth Committee of the Assembly).



that the Italian arguments, in 1935, were a mere pretext, especially since the government at Rome consistently refused to agree to any system of re-organization in Ethiopia under international supervision.

The unsavory case against Italy in the Ethiopian affair is increased by the fact that the illegal use of poison gas appears to have accounted for no small measure of the Fascist military success over the soldiers of Haile Selassie. Both Ethiopians and foreign observers complained to the League in the spring of 1936 that such gases were being used by the Italians, (238) although their use represented a violation of international law. (239) Rather conclusive evidence that the Fascists did resort to this means of conquering a helpless people is furnished both by the records of the Suez Canal Company, quoted before the League to the effect that large quantities of various poison gases were shipped from Italy to Italian armies in East Africa; (240) and by the report of the League Committee of Jurists, investigating charges against the belligerents, that, while Italy specifically denied other charges, "the Italian Government made no statement as to whether such gases had or had not been employed." (241) It seems, therefore, that the Italian attack upon Ethiopia was not only premeditated and lacking in justification, but also pursued by illegal means.

If Italy's position in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict is damaging, the stand of the League itself is scarcely less culpable. Although it indicted Italy for "resorting to war in disregard of its covenants," (242) Geneva at no time employed the full machinery provided in

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(238) League Document C.201.H.126.1936.VII.

(239) The Protocol of 1925 had outlawed gases. See reference to this on p. 68.

(240) League Document C.201.H.126.1936.VII, p.26.

(241) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 40.

(242) See pp. 19-20.

Article 16 of the League Covenant for use against an aggressor nation. This article contemplates the use of complete economic and financial sanctions, the summoning of "armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League," and the expulsion of an aggressor nation from the League "by a vote of the Council concurred in by the Representatives (243) of all the other Members of the League represented thereon." In the case of Italian aggression against Ethiopia, however, the League employed only an incomplete program of economic and financial sanctions against the aggressor state, and made no move in the direction of military sanctions or of the expulsion of Italy from League membership.

There were several reasons for the failure of the League to implement its full strength against Italy. Chief among them was the fact brought out by Mr. Anthony Eden that, "This dispute was not an isolated (244) event in a world which had no other cause for anxiety." In a Europe armed to the teeth, as it was in 1935, the possibility of a general war lent caution to all diplomatic endeavors. Besides this general condition, which weighed heavily upon the minds of all the statesmen at Geneva, there were political situations in various quarters of the world which made the thought of a vanquished Italy very unwelcome to the neighboring European countries. There were, moreover, certain economic interests on the part of individual European countries which made some of them refuse to apply even economic sanctions against Italy. The result of all these factors was a lack of solidarity at Geneva which rendered effective action against an aggressor nation practically impossible.

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(243) See p. 21.

(244) O. J. Special Supplement No. 151, p. 35.

In addition to being handicapped by the lack of unanimity of opinion among the League members, Geneva handicapped itself, as the  
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delegate of the Soviet Union pointed out, by waiting to act "in the case of an aggression which has actually taken place," rather than "in the case of aggression that is clearly in course of preparation." Before the Italian armies entered Ethiopia on October 3, 1935, the League had had ample warning of what was about to take place, but Haile Selassie's protests against the concentration of Italian troops in East Africa and his requests for neutral observers to be sent to the Ethiopian frontiers had failed to get response from Geneva. The League states, perhaps deliberately, did absolutely nothing until Mussolini's military campaign was already under way. By that time, the effectiveness of economic sanctions was seriously impaired, because Il Duce had had ample time in which to accumulate advance stocks of the commodities likely to be embargoed.  
(246)  
Moreover, as M. Potemkine suggested, the psychological factor of a project actually in operation in defiance of the League covenants weakened the power of Geneva and paralyzed its efforts to safeguard peace.

The nation whose attitude at Geneva was the most serious drawback to effective League action against Italy was France. The position of France may be understandable in terms of the internal conditions  
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prevailing in that country at the time, and of the fears of Germany which were requiring France to assume an especially cautious role in international affairs, but it is none the less true that the French delegates

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(245) O. J. April 1936, Part II, p. 380.

(246) *Idem*.

(247) See Chapter I.

minimised and delayed the program of sanctions against Italy. To this extent the French may be said to have aided the Italians in their African venture.

Great Britain was the leader in the movement at Geneva to strengthen the system of collective security by imposing a heavy penalty in sanctions upon Italy, as the aggressor nation. The British delegates may have been inspired in their stand by consideration of Britain's imperial interests in the Ethiopian affair, especially by British interests (248) in the Lake Tsana region, but it seems probable that they were also influenced by a sincere wish to preserve the League, particularly since (249) public opinion in England in 1935 deemed this a desirable object. Whatever the reasons for the British view, however, it was at British insistence that the League cause against Italy was pushed, and it seems likely that, had not France deserted the program of sanctions, Britain would have urged even more stringent measures against the Fascist government. As it was, fear of a European war in which Britain would be deprived of French assistance seems to have curtailed British efforts in the direction of punitive undertakings against Italy.

Next to Great Britain, the Soviet Union was the most notable of the Great Powers in its stand for League action against Italy in the Italo-Ethiopian controversy. As in the case of Britain, the attitude of the U.S.S.R. may have been conditioned by considerations of particular (250) good for the government involved, although the interests of the Soviet Union in the conflict were much less direct than those of Britain. In

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(248) See Chapter I.

(249) See p. 6.

(250) See pp. 75-76.

any event, the Russian delegates made an outstandingly strong stand at Geneva, and the government at Moscow was noticeable as the only Great Power to accept the idea of the petroleum sanction against Italy.

Although some of the small states, notably Albania, Austria, Hungary, and Paraguay, did not assist Geneva in its program of sanctions against Italy, it cannot be said that the smaller countries' lack of co-operation was responsible for the League's failure in the Ethiopian situation, because in the main these states were devoted to the cause of collective security. The assistance which the non-co-operating small nations could give Italy was, at best, of minor importance, and was more than counter-balanced by the loyalty to the League of the great majority of little states, including in their number many from whom Italy was obtaining valuable products. Rumania, which was one of the lesser nations to uphold the program of sanctions, was, for instance, the largest single exporter of petroleum products to Italy.

The United States of America, although a non-member of the League, cannot be said to have impeded the course of League action against Italy. There was ample evidence of the willingness of the Roosevelt administration to support the League program against Italy in practice if not through advance promises. While the United States controlled the largest potential petroleum supply in the world, even in this respect the country showed no disposition to profit at the expense of League members which might adopt an oil sanction. On the contrary, American citizens were repeatedly warned by their government of the inadvisability of such profits, and in 1935 the United States furnished only 12.5% of Italy's supply of petroleum products. Had the League states embargoed

this commodity, the indications were that the United States would have followed suit, since all other products covered by the League sanctions were subjected to embargo or limited exportation in this country.

The uncertain quantity in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict was, curiously enough, Germany. Although the Nazi state did nothing directly either for the League or for Italy, the ever-present fear at Geneva that Germany might profit from League action against Italy seemed to be the most effective deterrent in Geneva's full use of the League machinery against an aggressor nation. Indirectly, therefore, Hitler played into Mussolini's hands by keeping the attention of the Geneva delegates distracted. Indirectly, also, Germany did profit from the Ethiopian affair, because it is a safe assumption that Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland would have called forth more vigorous action from France and Britain if it had not been for the weakened condition of the League resulting from Italy's disregard of her treaty obligations.

The effect of the League's Ethiopian failure upon the system of collective security embodied in the Geneva organization cannot be accurately estimated, but is known to be great. The most immediate result of the breakdown in collective machinery appears to have been Germany's bold, unilateral denunciation of its treaty obligations, an event evidently timed to coincide with the lack of solidarity, of unanimity, at Geneva. Another significant development is the indication that some of the powerful League members themselves are dubious concerning the degree of protection which the League can offer, and are supplementing the Geneva organization with bilateral treaties. The Franco-Soviet Pact and the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, both concluded in the period of the Ethiopian

controversy, are evidences of this trend in international affairs. Other developments, at the present time less clearly crystallised than those mentioned above, may appear as a result of the Italo-Ethiopian affair. One serious question involves the small nations at Geneva. After their experience in the Ethiopian conflict, can these smaller members of the League be expected, on future occasions, to jeopardise their economic good in order to uphold a doubtful structure at Geneva? If, as Haile Selassie claimed, the cause of Ethiopia was the cause of all small nations before the League, Geneva might expect less ardor on subsequent occasions from its smaller adherents.

At the League Assembly of June 30 to July 4, 1936, evidence was plentiful that representatives of states both great and small felt the danger to the League which was inherent in its Italo-Ethiopian failure. Delegate after delegate made reference to the discouragement of the hour and to the necessity for taking hope in the thought of a more successful future. There was also a tendency to frequent discussion of possible reforms in the League machinery. Just what reforms would be proposed was not definite, but the speakers seemed convinced that the effects of the chapter they had written in the preceding months must be controlled in some fashion in the future. Rather tardily, Geneva appeared to be realizing that it was establishing a perilous precedent in permitting might, in fact if not in theory, to triumph over right.

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